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SPECIAL OPS

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DELATORRES

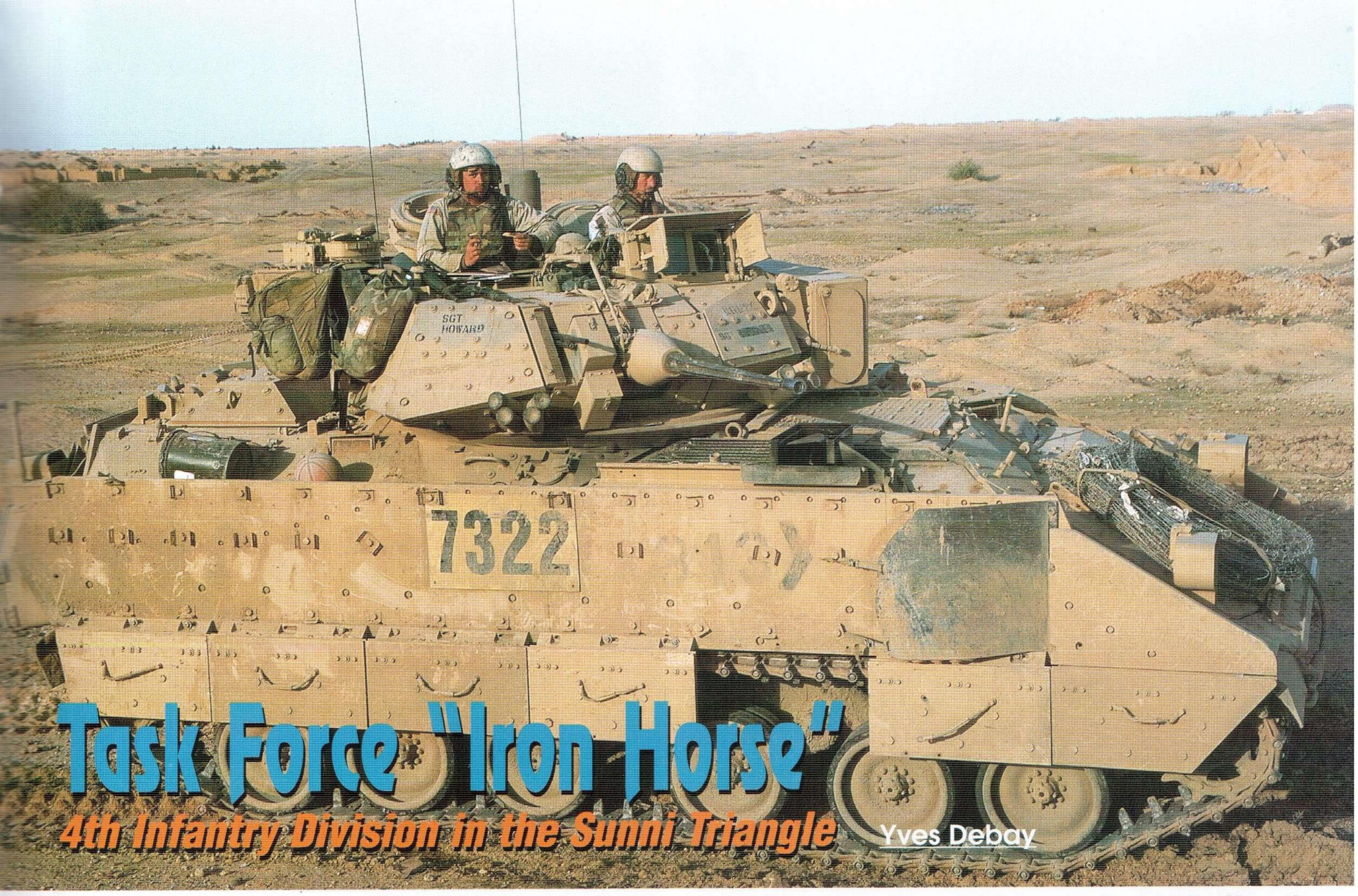
Coalition Forces in Iraq 2

4th Infantry Division
Stryker Brigade
1st Armored Division
The Convoy Routes
Multinational Division South East

Task Force "Iron Horse"

4th Infantry Division in the Sunni Triangle

Yves Debay



Nice view of an M2A2 Bradley of the 1-8 Infantry in Samarah. A few days after this photo was taken, they took part in Operation "Ivy Blizzard." The vehicle has lost one of the wheel-protection panels. The vehicle's tactical number is 7322. We also saw the numbers 7321, 7322, 7323, and 7324 on various vehicles.

Samura: January 16, 2004: One GI is killed during an operation to search for weapons caches.

Taji: January 17, 2004: Three soldiers are killed during an ambush by an IED.

Ba' qubah: January 21, 2004: Two soldiers struck dead in a mortar attack.

Bayji: January 24, 2004: Bradley infantry fighting vehicle is hit by an RPG's rocket. One soldier dies on his arrival to the hospital.

Kirkuk: January 31, 2004: Three soldiers killed by an improvised explosive device (IED) near oil fields north of the city.

Balad: February 1, 2004: One soldier is killed and 12 are wounded during a rocket attack against a logistic dump.

All of these deaths have one thing in common: The soldiers all belonged to the 4th Infantry Division, which at the time of writing is operating in the infamous "Sunni Triangle" in Iraq. This sad litany demonstrates that in ten days the division lost ten of its soldiers, one man per day on the average. It can be said that during the nine-month war in Iraq, one out of three GIs killed has belonged to the 4th Infantry Division.

Unlike the French military commanders of the Second Empire who, after the battles of Solferino and Magenta, based the merits of a regiment on the number of its dead, Major General Raymond Odierno, the 4th Infantry Division's commander, would like to limit the number of casualties before the division is relieved in March of 2004. He would like to bring home as many boys as possible to Fort Hood. The General knows he will still lose a number of soldiers while waiting for the "cavalry", the "Texans" of the 1st Cavalry Division in this case, but the boys will have accomplished their mission with gallantry and honor. The days of a "zero dead" war are over for the American troops in Iraq.

Samarah is a medium-size city located 80 kilometers (50 miles) north of Baghdad. Although it is the home of a Shi'ite mosque that is often visited by Iranian pilgrims, it is in the middle of the "Sunni Triangle," which is considered a stronghold of resistance. On the evening of 11 December, we had the opportunity to take pictures of a combat group belonging to the 3rd Brigade of the 4th Infantry Division while they were making a demonstration of force in a suburb of the city. The tower in the background is the minaret of the great, fortified mosque of Calife Al Mutawakkil, which was built in 848. In the 9th century, Samarah was the capital of the powerful Abassid Dynasty.

The "show-the-flag" operation was probably a reconnaissance for Operation "Ivy Blizzard", which began three days later. This disembarked combat team is from the 1-8 Infantry from Fort Carson, Colorado. Their weapons include the classic M4 assault rifle and the M249 Light Machine Gun.

The M240G, which is the famous Belgian machine gun built under license by FN Manufacturing of Columbia, North Carolina, is now the main medium machine gun used in the US Army. It has a caliber of 7.62mm x 51 and a rate of fire of 650 to1000 rounds per minute.

Another disembarked team from the 1-8 Infantry has taken up a position on the archeological site of the old palace at Samarah. In the background is the wreck of an S-60 57mm anti-aircraft gun that was once operated by the Iraqi Army.

Here a machine gunner from the 1-8 Infantry prepares to provide fire support for the troops, if necessary. Note the ivy-leaf division patches on his shoulder and helmet cover.

Certainly there are successes. In fact, it was during Operation "Red Dawn," which was led by 6000 soldiers of the First Brigade of the division, that Saddam Hussein was captured. The former dictator was hiding in a rat hole only 15 kilometers (9 miles) from one of his luxurious palaces, which had become the headquarters of the 4th Infantry Division. Though many can be credited with bringing about this arrest, which boosted the morale of the Americans, honor definitely belongs to the "Ivy" Division.

Delay of Deployment to Iraq

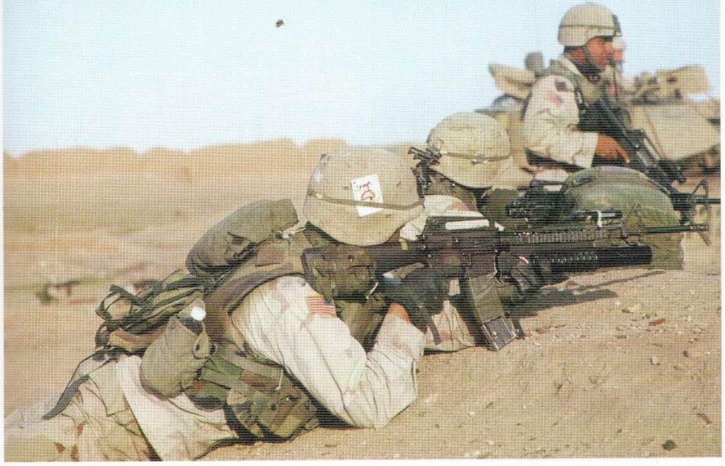
The Middle East deployment of the 4th Infantry Division began in the Mediterranean Sea during the late winter months of 2003. The whole world knows that it was from that time that the countdown to war began and that the days of Saddam's Iraq were numbered. The Pentagon took no precautions to hide their combat plans. The powerful 4th Infantry Division, the first division in the US Army to be digitized in an effort to employ to the Army's best advantage the modern digital information and communication technology on the battlefield, was tasked with opening the northern front. Coming down along Kurdistan, the division was to first seize Mosul, the third largest city in the country, secure its invaluable oil fields, and then attack Baghdad from the north.

But politics would decide otherwise. While the division circled in the waters of the Mediterranean Sea, the Turkish government, under pressure of public opinion, forbade the American ground forces access to its territory. That decision in Ankara, which dreaded the creation of an independent Kurdistan after Saddam's fall, would have a great influence on the commitment of the division. The 4th Infantry Division would have to enter Iraq through Kuwait.

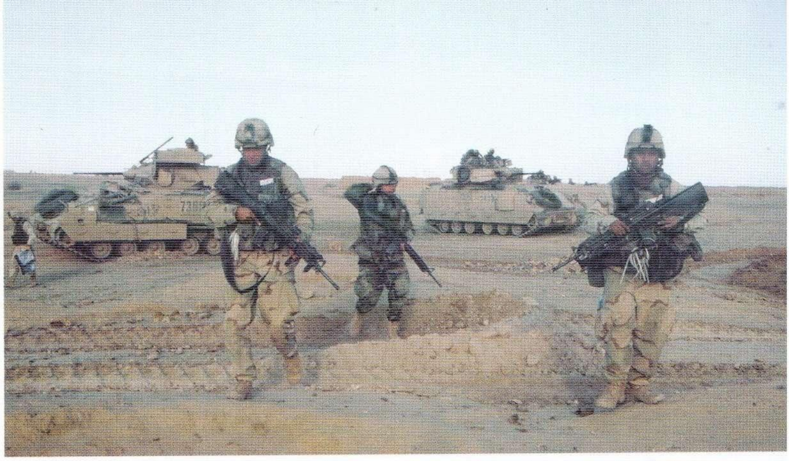
War began on 20 March, and the 30 vessels transporting the material and some of the soldiers, were still on the water. On 27 March, while the Marines and the 3rd Infantry Division were taking a break in the center of Iraq before moving on Baghdad, the 4th Infantry Division crossed the Suez Canal. The Marine Amtracs and the 3rd Infantry Division's M1 tanks were in the suburbs of Baghdad when the first armored vehicles of the "Ivy" Division landed in Kuwait. It was a seemingly "deprived" division that crossed the border into Iraq in April 2003.

The 4th Infantry Division Enters the Fray

That frustration would not last long. The Coalition staff quickly realized that Iraq is far from being under control. The 4th Infantry Division would soon encounter a resistance that nobody expected. The Shi'ite part of the country, which was happy to be free of Saddam, exhibited a wait-and-see attitude. But the "Ivy" Division collided with Sunni resistance in its sanctuary of Tikrit, Ba'qubah, Balad, and Samara. On 3 July 2003, a mortar round wounded twenty. The division was put on notice that henceforth they would be dealing with a merciless opponent that included former Baathists strengthened by foreign Islamic volunteers, some of whom come from Al-Qaeda's sphere of influence. The American occupation would provoke what Saddam Hussein had avoided by the use of terror, the arrival of Islamic fundamentalists in Iraq.



A squad has taken up a position near Samarah. Note that the soldier armed with the M4 and M203 40mm grenade launcher has a Joker playing card attached to his helmet for luck. His weapon holds two ammunition magazines that have been taped together for more efficient reloading.



These soldiers have disembarked from a Bradley infantry fighting vehicle (visible in the background). Note how the soldiers carry plastic bands for securing prisoners. Interestingly, the soldier in the middle wears a battle dress uniform featuring the Central European camouflage pattern.

In July there was an average of 13 attacks daily on the American forces, and the GIs of the 4th Infantry Division became acquainted with dirty war. One such introduction took place on 27 July 2003 in Ba'qubah, 60 kilometers (37 miles) northeast of Baghdad. On that morning, an initial mortar attack was launched against an American camp, causing no injuries. Some hours later, three GIs were killed and four wounded during a grenade attack. The soldiers, who belonged to the 4th Infantry Division, were guarding a hospital for children.

Several days after the death of Saddam Hussein's sons in Mosul, five arms caches that included 250 AK-47s, 28 submachine guns, 1000 RPG-7s, 3000 mortar rounds, and 33 SAM-7 "Strela" missiles were destroyed during Operation "Ivy Snake," which also resulted in the death of 60 members of the resistance forces. At the end of August, in Khalis, 3000 US soldiers participated in Operation "Ivy Needle," during which 390 persons who were suspected of launching operations against the Coalition were arrested. All operations carried out by the 4th Infantry Division contain the world "ivy" in their title, which is also the acronym for the Roman numeral "IV", the number of the division, which also has four ivy leaves in its division shoulder patch.

In August, the average number of attacks launched against Coalition forces increased to 20 per day, with the aggressors not hesitating to attack armored vehicles. On Thursday, 18 September, a rocket destroyed a Bradley fighting vehicle that had been immobilized by an explosive charge. According to witnesses, several GIs were seriously burned. The television station Al-Arabya asserted that the attack resulted in eight deaths.

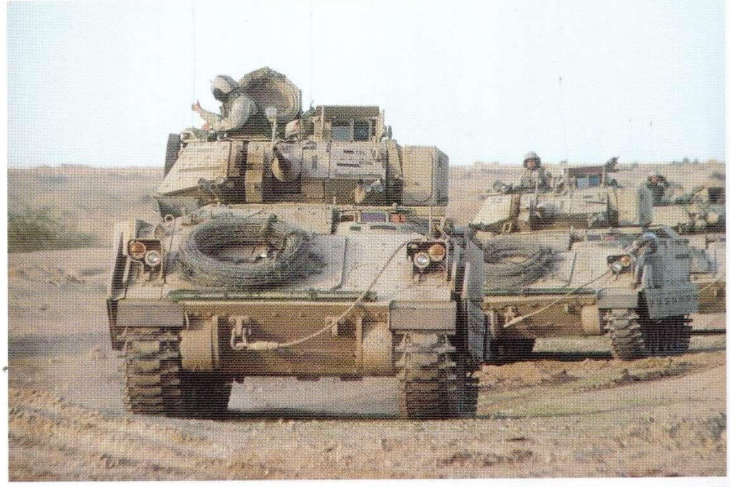
In Tikrit, at about that same period, a well-organized and murderous ambush caused the death of three GIs who were ambushed while searching for mortars. The image of a burning HMMWV was shown on the television. (Simultaneous to the ambush, a mortar attack was launched against a nearby camp.) With the outbreak of attacks, the US Army headquarters in Qatar was reactivated. General John Abizaid from Tampa, Florida, the "boss" of the US forces in the Middle East and Central Asia, would settle down there.

The Pentagon seems to want to dedicate important means to finish the business with the Iraqi resistance by means of large-scale operations. In December, three hundred brand new light, mobile, armored Strykers from the 2nd Infantry Division waited to be allocated to Task Force "Iron Horse", which was under command of the 4th Infantry Division.

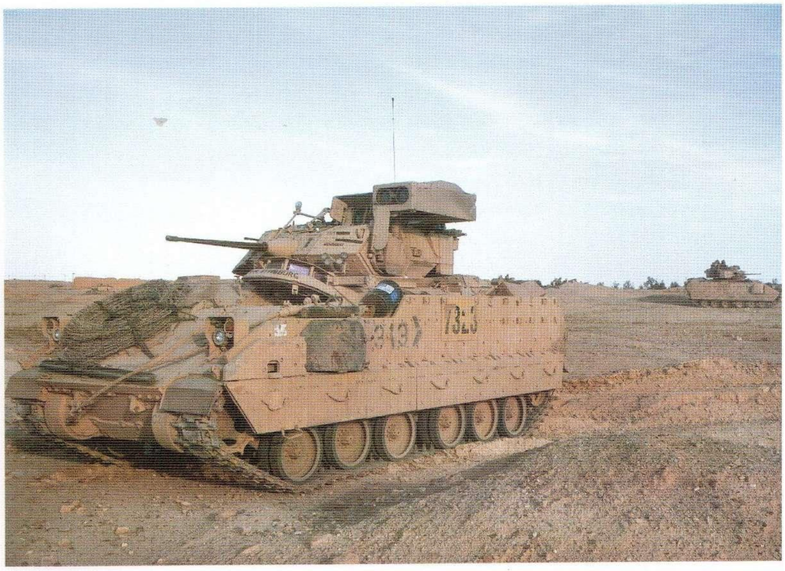
Following the destruction of a Black Hawk helicopter from the 101st Airborne (Air Assault) Division that was shot down over the division HQ in Tikrit, Operation "Ivy Cyclone" was initiated. Fighter-bombers from the US Air Force, along with the divisional artillery, were used to support the GIs who moved out on a vast search-and-destroy mission.

Bloody November

November 2003 proved to be particularly murderous for the US



Nice view of an M2A2 Bradley from the 1-8 Infantry. The names of the crewmembers are written on the armor in front of their individual combat positions. For twenty years the Bradley has been the main infantry fighting vehicle in the US Army. The resistance forces have only destroyed a few Bradleys.



The crew of this Bradley of the 1-8 Infantry was kind enough, despite the danger, to erect its TOW launcher.

During the active phase of the war, several TOWs were fired to eliminate Iraqi soldiers entrenched in concrete buildings.

forces in Iraq. On 30 November, 12 GIs were killed. In Samarah, also on 30 November, a violent confrontation broke out on the main street of the city between resistance fighters and the troops escorting a bank truck. The battle lasted for three hours, with combat helicopters having to intervene. The Americans announced that they killed 54 enemy fighters. Some 30 civilians also died.

Ten days later, on our return trip, an Iraqi asserted that resistance troops communicating over Touraya (the satellite telephone system in Arabic countries) stated that they had knocked out an M1 tank and several HMMWVs, and wounded 30 GIs, numbers that are doubtless exaggerated. One week later, in that same city, Operation "Ivy Blizzard" began. The 4th Infantry Division arrested 86 people and killed two. Two hundred AK-47s and material intended for use in the manufacture of IEDs was seized. It is certain that Operation "Ivy Blizzard" inflicted great losses on the resistance forces, but like most guerilla groups around the world, they adapt to the loss and ceaselessly increase in strength. The fight will continue to be rough for the Americans, who are too isolated from the people – some of whom consider them to be occupiers not liberators – and they have far to go in the fight to win their hearts.

Composition of "Iron Horse"

The headquarters of 4th Infantry Division, as well as various support and logistic units, is located on a hill dominating Tikrit in a marble palace once owned by Saddam Hussein. Although threats from the air are practically non-existent, the site is protected by Avengers and new Bradley "Stingers" from the 1-44th Air Defense Artillery Battalion. At a luxurious desk sitting under a crystal chandelier, which contrasts markedly with his camouflaged dress and mud-covered desert boots, Lieutenant-Colonel Bill MacDonald welcomes us. "Sadly, this is not my real office. A shame," he says. "Welcome to Task Force 'Iron Horse' and our small corner of hell."

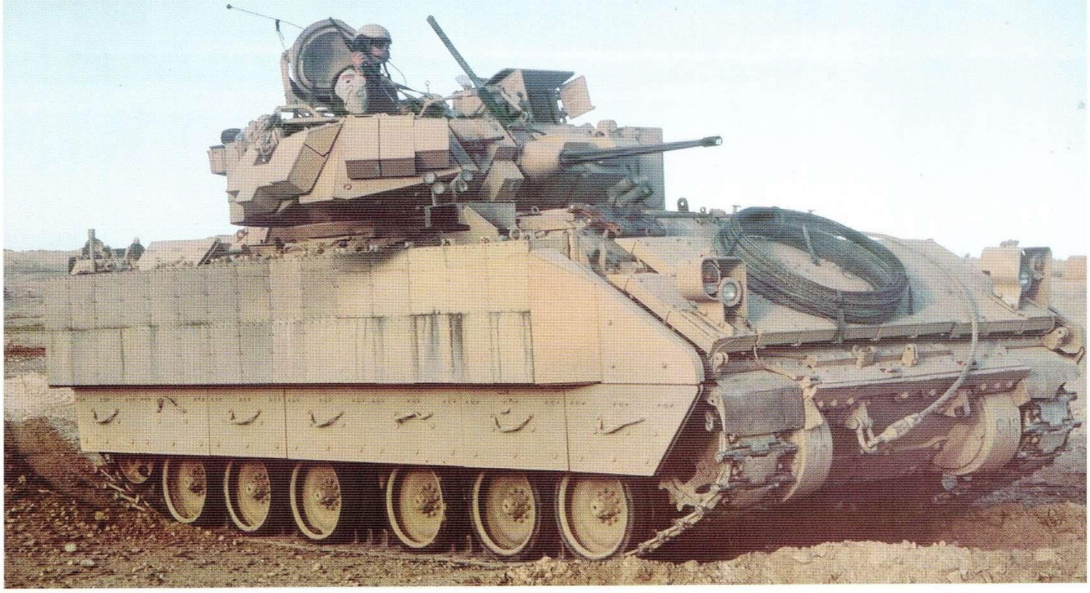
A nice view of an M2A2 Bradley, which is commanded by Staff Sergeant Doiron, whose name appears on the armored plates on the turret.

In just a few words the imminently nice officer presents us with a description of Task Force "Iron Horse", which is under the command of 4th Infantry Division. "Normally," he explains, "the division contains 16,000 people. But here with the other reinforcements and support units of the Corps, we will reach 32,000 people in our AOR. For us, everything is decided here, in this magnificent palace."

The small corner of hell mentioned by Lieutenant-Colonel MacDonald is comprised of three-fourths of the infamous "Sunni Triangle". With much black humor, a warrant officer declares to us colorfully, "They left two cans of worms [Editor's note: This is slang for "difficult problems"] for those big mouth paras of the 82nd Airborne with

In the Bradley, the commander is situated on the right and the gunner is on the left. A heavy coat of mud masks the unit number on the bottom front of the vehicles.

One of the Bradleys involved in the reconnaissance of Samarah. It is fitted with unusual armor skirt that is probably reactive.

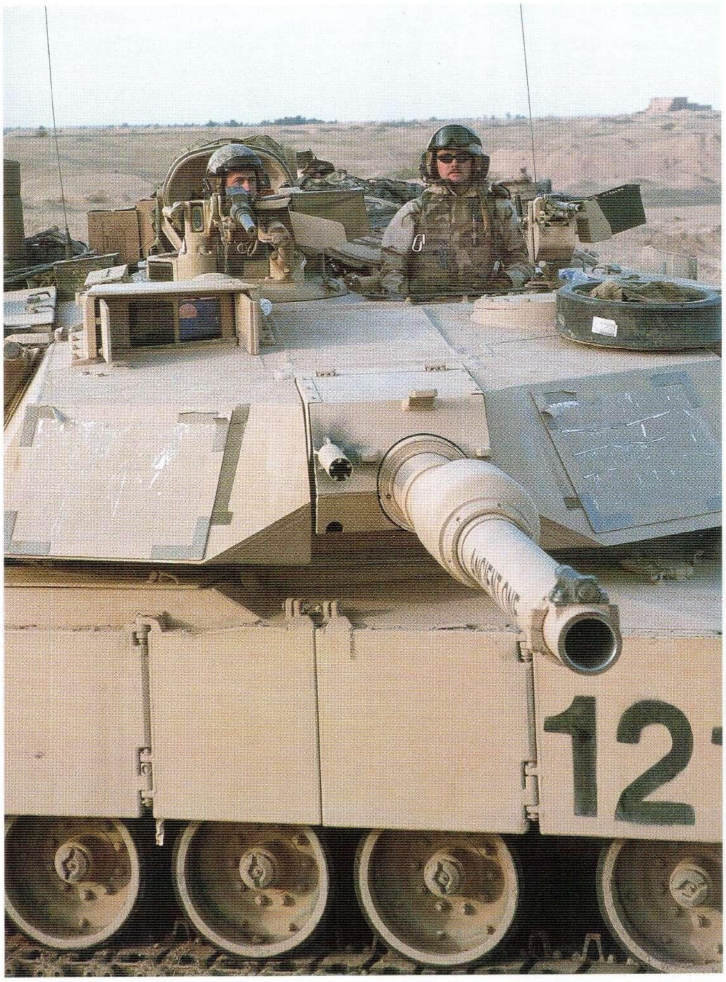


Fallujah and Ramadi, but they kept some for us: Tikrit, Ba'qubah, Samara, and Balad. Kirkuk is a little quieter. That makes three provinces of Iraq, which corresponds to the size of the state of West Virginia."

The Sunni country is covered in the following manner by the five combat brigades of Task Force "Iron Horse":

Tikrit: 1st Brigade, 4th Infantry (Fort Hood, Texas)
Ba'qubah: 2nd Brigade, 4th Infantry (Fort Hood, Texas)
Samarah /Balad: 3rd Brigade, 4th Infantry (Fort Carson, Colorado)
Kirkuk: 173rd Airborne Brigade, US Vth Corps Europe

This last unit distinguished itself during the active phase of the war by an operational jump on Hariri's airport near Arbil, the capital of Kurdistan.



Front view of the turret of the M1A1 "Ancient One." Note the sight, the gas-warning panel on the front, and the gunpowder traces near the coaxial .50-caliber machine gun.

Along with these great combat units, one can add the brand new "Stryker" Brigade, the 3-2 INF "Arrowhead", which, before going to the support of the 1st Brigade of the 101st Airborne (Air Assault) in Mosul, worked in Sunni country for the benefit of the division for more than a month. Most of the support and logistic units are in Tikrit, with the exception of the DIVARTY (Division Artillery) in Taji.

The picture would not be complete without the "Buffalo Soldiers" of the 1-10 CAV, which is closely monitoring the Iranian border The battalion is divided into five troops: three mixed armored units with Bradleys and M1A2s, and two helicopter units with Kiowa Warriors.

Form and Function of the Resistance

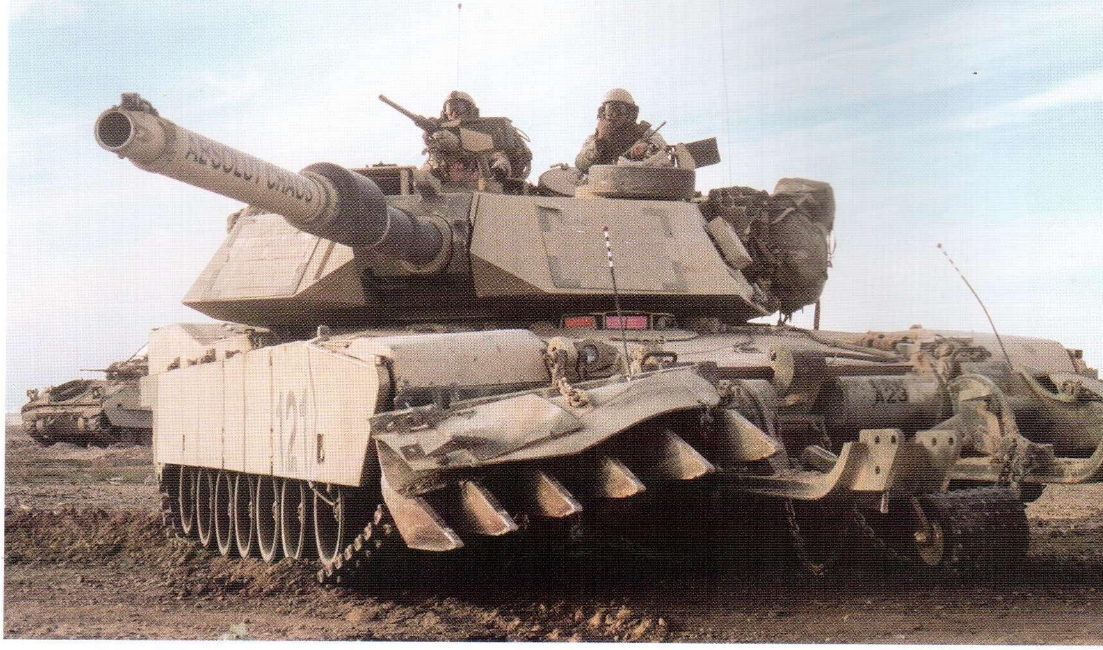
At the palace in Tikrit, Colonel MacDonald explains to us how the resistance forces function. "The resistance could be organized in three circles," he states. "The first is that of the high Baath officials, the ones that were on the playing cards. They no longer represent a real danger, but all of them were arrested."

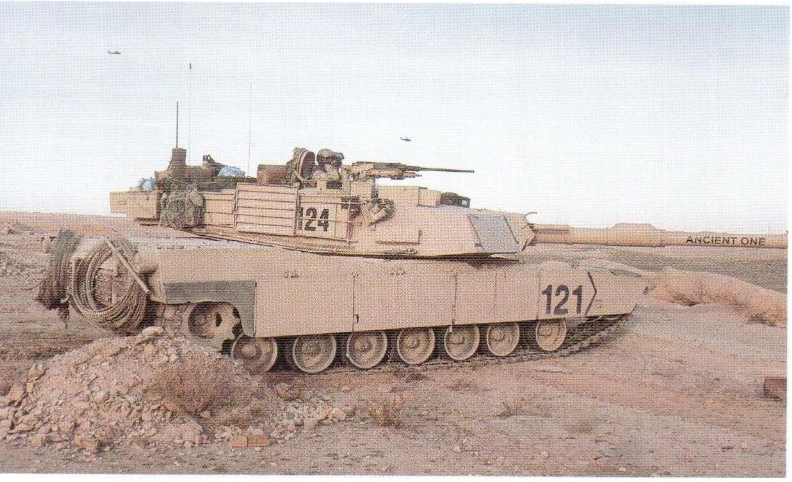
Continuing, he says, "The second circle is doubtless the most dangerous. They are the junior officers, policemen, civil servants, and former 'Moukhbarat' [Note: secret service]. They are the executives of the resistance and they do not have anything to lose.

"The third circle is that of the 'soldiers', who are sometimes recruited for money. Killing American soldiers can pay up to 1500 US dollars."

The heavy reconnaissance of Samarah received support from the only tank battalion of the 3rd Brigade, 4th Infantry Division: the 1-68 Armor. Here the M1A1 Abrams, which is named "Ancient One," is seen in position.

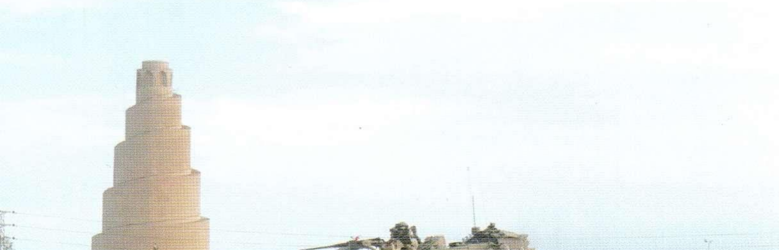
"Absolut Chaos" is another of the M1A1 tanks from the 1-68 Armor. It is fitted with the RAMTA mine-clearing plough. Note the heavy black smoke stains on the rear of the barrel on "Absolut Chaos."





This photograph of the M1A1 "Ancient One" shows the effectiveness of its desert camouflage paint scheme.

This official version is probably pretty close to reality. Nevertheless, some of the Iraqis in the third circle are not motivated by money. As for the suicide/homicide bombers, most of them come from foreign lands. It is not in the Iraqi mentality to kill oneself. With a small, cynical smile, a former Iraqi officer tells me, "We are OK with engaging American troops in a classic ambush, but if it is necessary to use a 'kamikaze', a lot of foreigners wish to die for Allah . . . not Iraqi people."



M1A1 tanks from the 1-68 Armor travel at full speed over the ground where eleven centuries earlier existed the capital city of the Abassid Empire.

At the command post of the 3rd Brigade in Balad, female Captain Sandra Chavez confides to us: "On our arrival, there were quite a lot of classic ambushes with RPGs, but the Iraqis learned to respect our firepower, so since then they have mostly used IEDs. Most of the time they are booby-trapped hand grenades rigged to explode with an alarm clock or washer. Lately, the IEDs are becoming more and more sophisticated."

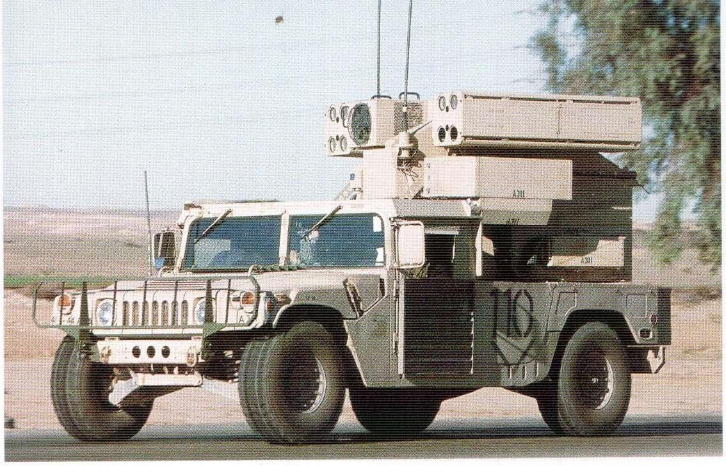
The 4th Infantry Division Gives its Best

Ambushes have caused some disturbing losses, and it is difficult to see how in the near future the US Army can limit the number and frequency of these attacks. The CIMIC (military civil affairs) officers are making remarkable efforts, though. For example, the engineers in the division are restoring tap water in certain villages. But the majority of the population is afraid and so they hesitate to collaborate.

One of the human dramas of this war that is not often discussed: the wounded soldiers. The modern GI is very well protected thanks to his Kevlar helmet and flak vest, but an explosion can often injure arms and legs. For every soldier killed there are ten wounded, three or four seriously. This is something that can be hard on morale.

By the time you read this, the division will have returned to the states for a well-deserved rest. Most of the soldiers will not regret their service in Iraq. They carried out their duty even though they faced difficult conditions. There is no debating it: The GIs of the 4th Infantry Division are among the best of the Americans.

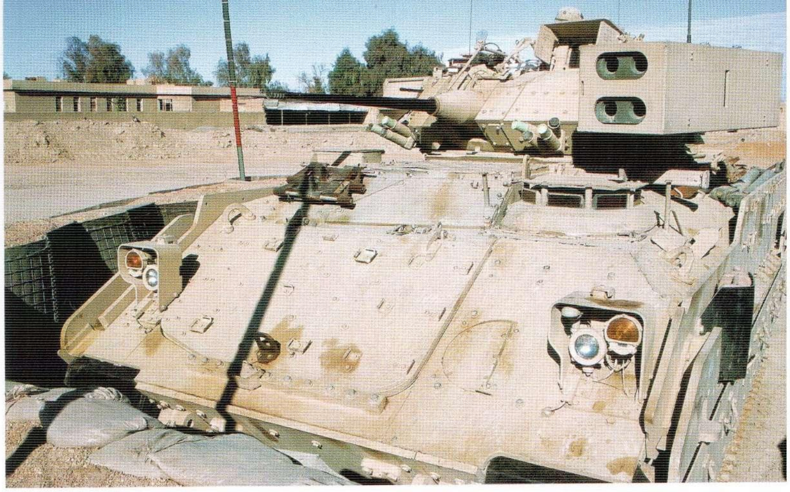
A soldier from the 4th Infantry Division, one of the more open GIs that the photographer met in his travels, flashes a peace sign from his position in the turret of an M1A1 from the 1-68 Armor.



The events of September 11 have compelled everyone to be more careful. So, even though there is no real threat from the air, the HQ of the 4th Infantry Division, which is located in one of Saddam Hussein's former palaces, is protected by Avengers from 1-44th Air Defense Artillery Battalion.

In order to provide relief to the infantry battalions, which are constantly under heavy pressure, the fire-support troops of DIVARTY and ADA stored their heavy weapons in the garage. They are not the best tools for combating guerillas and conducting numerous foot patrols.

Crew members of the M113A2 from the 4th Engineers stay alert during a patrol. The area they are in is particularly dangerous.



One of the most rare armored vehicles seen in Iraq is this M6 Bradley "Linebacker" short-range air defense system. It is a Bradley infantry fighting vehicle with its TOW anti-tank guided missile system replaced by a pod containing four Stinger fire-and-forget surface-to-air missiles. The stabilized 25mm M242 Chain Gun is retained, as is the 7.62mm coaxial machine gun. The main advantage of the Bradley Linebacker compared with the Avenger is that the crewmembers are under complete armor protection. Also, the vehicle has the capability of keeping up with the mechanized units.

The Units of the 4th Infantry Division

1st Brigade, 4th Infantry (Fort Hood)

1-22 Infantry Battalion (M2 Bradley)
1-66 Armor Battalion (M1 Abrams)
3-66 Armor Battalion (M1 Abrams)
299th Engineer Battalion

2nd Brigade, 4th Infantry (Fort Hood)

2-8 Infantry Battalion (M2 Bradley)
1-67 Armor Battalion (M1 Abrams)
3-67 Armor Battalion (M1 Abrams)
588th Engineer Battalion

3rd Brigade, 4th Infantry (Fort Carson)

1-68 Armor Battalion (M1 Abrams)
1-8 Infantry Battalion (M2 Bradley)
1-12 Infantry Battalion (M2 Bradley)
4th Engineer Battalion

4th AVN Brigade, 4th Infantry

1-4 Aviation Battalion (Attack on AH-64 Apache)
2-4 Aviation Battalion (Assault and transport on UH-60L Black Hawk)
1-10 Cavalry Squadron (OH-58D Kiowa Warrior)

Division Artillery (DIVARTY)

4-42 Field Artillery Battalion (Paladin)
3-16 Field Artillery Battalion (Paladin)
3-29 Field Artillery Battalion (Paladin)
2-20 Field Artillery Battalion (MLRS)

Division Support Command (DISCOM)

4th Forward Support Battalion
204th Forward Support Battalion
404th Forward Support Battalion
704th Forward Support Battalion
104th Military Intelligence Battalion
1-44th Air (sight) Defense Artillery Battalion (Avenger and Bradley AA)
124th Signal Battalion
Headquarters and Headquarters Company
4th Military Police Company
4th Infantry Division Band
610th Engineer Detachment

An M113A2 belonging to the 4th Engineer Battalion patrols in the vicinity of Anaconda logistic base near Balad.

Balad, where this M113A2 was photographed, is located 80 km (50 miles) north of Baghdad. It is one of the cities in the area known as the Sunni Triangle.

History of the 4th Infantry Division

The 4th Infantry Division was formed in December 1917 at the time of America's entry into World War One. Under the command of Major General George H. Cameron, it embarked for Europe and joined the American Expeditionary Force.

After arriving in France, the division was split up and its different regiments were united with the French army during the Aisne/Marne campaign in July 1918. Reunited for a final assault, it served on both the British and French fronts, where it lost 11,500 men (dead, wounded and missing).

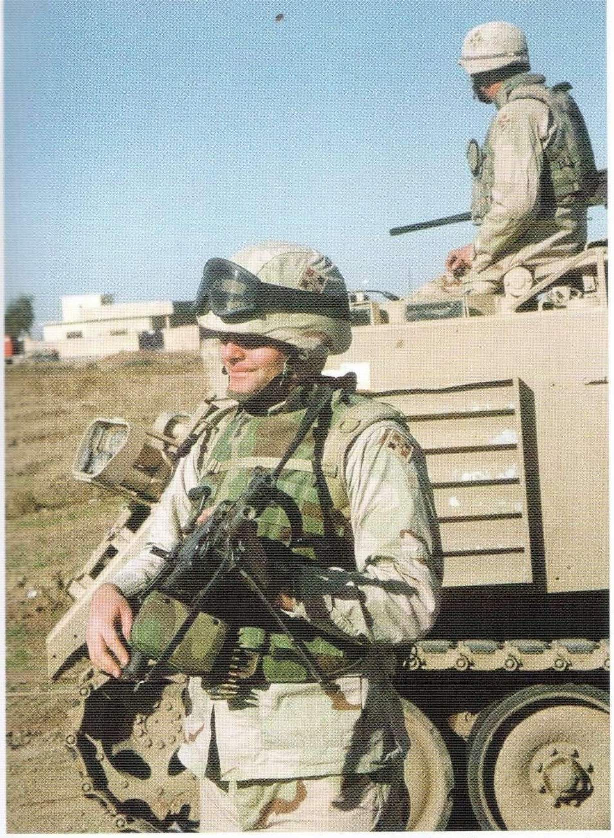
In 1944, the division found itself in England, where it trained extensively for Operation "Overlord", the invasion of Europe. On 6 June 1944, the 8th Infantry Regiment of the 4th Infantry Division was the first American unit to land at Utah Beach. The rest of the division followed, fighting hard for 26 days to reach it objectives before being relieved by the 101st Airborne. During this month of extensive fighting in the Norman hedgerow country, the "Ivy" Division lost 5000 troops. Following the collapse of the German front in Normandy, the 4th Infantry Division fought shoulder to shoulder with the 2nd French DB of General Leclerc to the liberation of Paris. The GIs freed the eastern part of the capital.

After a short rest, the 4th Infantry Division was sent into the bloody fight at the Huertgen Forest, which exhausted several divisions of the US Army, toward the end of the war. Following the Battle of the Bulge, where the division held its positions, the 4th Infantry Division joined the "rush" toward Berlin, crossing the Rhine and the Danube. At the end of hostilities, the division was in position on the Isar River in Austria.

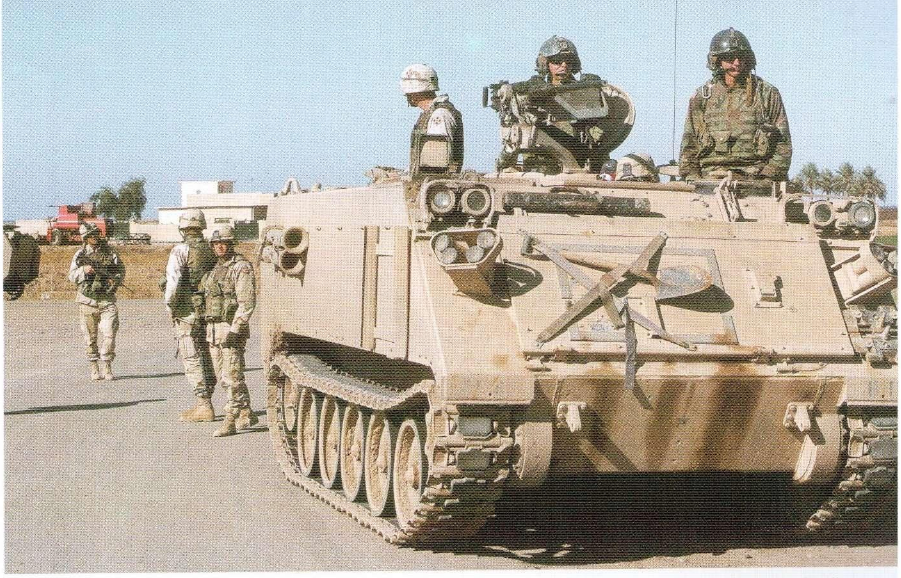
Two decades later, the 4th Infantry Division took part in the Vietnam conflict, spending five years with the 1st Brigade on the south shore of the China Sea, the 2nd Brigade in the central highlands and the 3rd Brigade in the Mekong Delta. A total of 11 operations appear in the history of the division's participation in Vietnam. In 1970, after its return from Vietnam, the 4th Infantry Division was reorganized at Fort Carson, Colorado, as a mechanized division. The division remained there until 1995. At that time it moved to Ford Hood, Texas, where it became the first of the digitized divisions of the US Army's Force XXI, the move to modernize the US Army. (In fact, the 4th Infantry Division recently adopted a new nickname for itself, "Iron Horse", to better indicate its increased power.)

In the autumn of 2003, the division made preparations to deploy to the Middle East, where history would blend into current events.

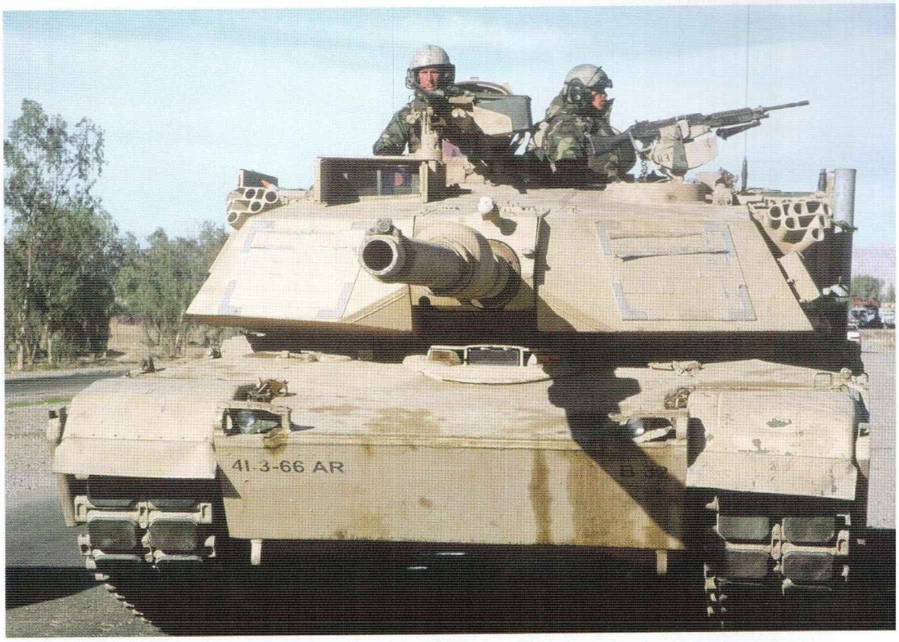
Once their M113A2 stops, soldiers from the 4th Engineers disembark to perform their mission. On this occasion they were tasked with preventing trouble from arising at a service station that just received a shipment of fuel.



A good view of the equipment and uniform worn by the troops from the 4th Engineers as they keep watch at a service station in Balad.



Another view of an M113A2 from the 4th Engineer Battalion. Note the varied camouflage of the troops and the AT-4 anti-tank weapons that are ready for use fitted to the side of the armored vehicle.



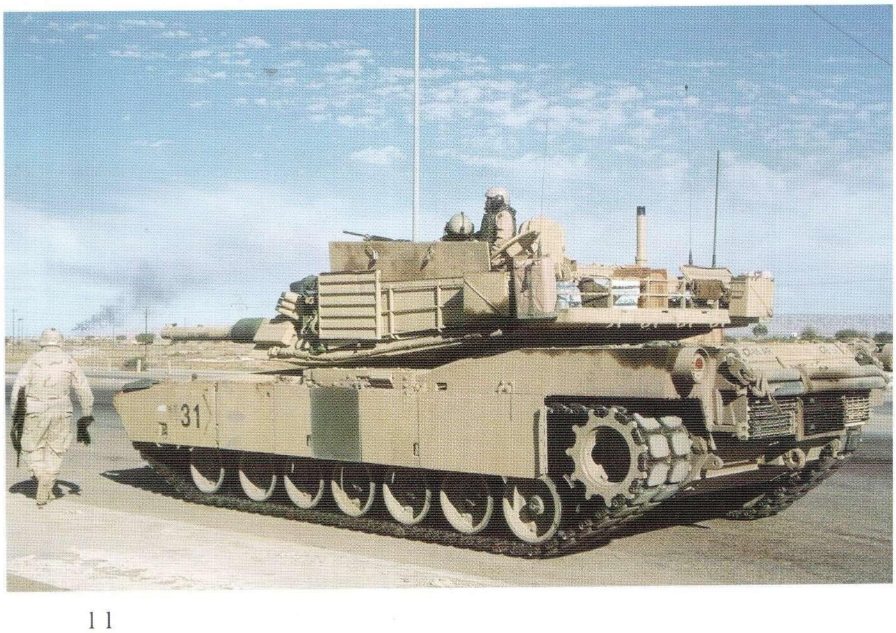
An M1A1(HA) belonging to the 3-66 Armor. The four tanks that make up a platoon from the 3-66 are serving as a checkpoint at Ash Sharqa, which is located about 113 km (70 miles) north of Tikrit, where an important oil refinery is situated.

Dangerous Mission

Working in Iraq is difficult and dangerous. The PIOs (Public Information Officers) are not really interested in specialized press, and if the reporter is not accredited through the Pentagon, he has no chance of becoming "embedded" in a unit. Information is scarce, and the troops are ordered not to communicate. Nevertheless, sometimes the troops accepted us for a short time. Ninety percent of the photographs here were taken as opportunity permitted while on the road. Sometimes the US soldiers allowed us to take photos without any hassles; at other times they were very aggressive, pointed their weapons at us, and told us to move away. In fact, [military journalist] Carl Schulze and I made a long road trip all through Iraq in a local taxi driven by a courageous Iraqi named Salaam.

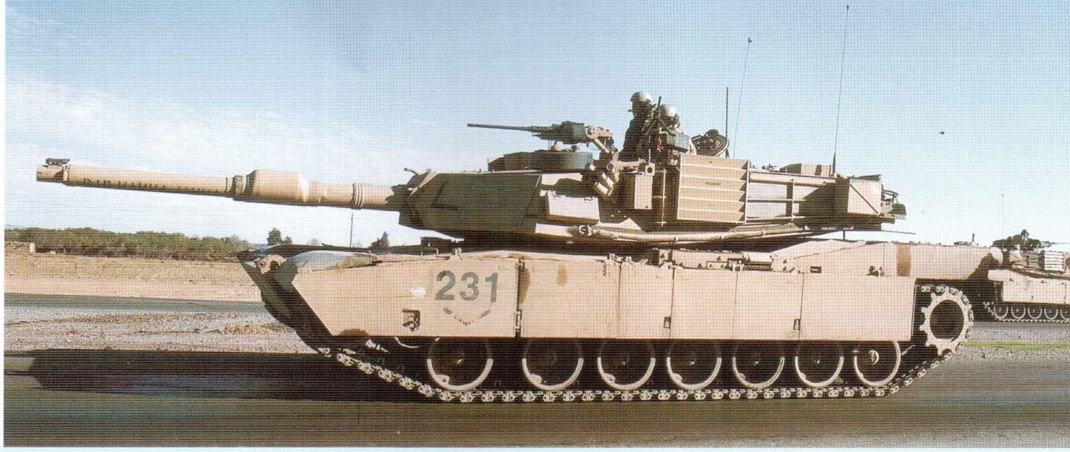
Being isolated in the middle of a local population is a kind of safety measure. During our trip, seven Spaniards, two Koreans, and two Japanese traveling alone were murdered . . . but they were driving large 4x4 vehicles that attracted the attention of resistance fighters and bandits.

Because we were not embedded, we were forced to sleep in local hotels, sometimes under very harsh conditions. Very often we were the only non-Iraqis in the city, as in Samarah, which was by no means under the control of the Coalition forces.



The M1 Abrams tanks that compose the checkpoint are from the 1st Brigade, 4th Infantry Division based at Tikrit. Note the green camouflage that appears in some sections of the tank and the important rack around the turret that is used to store personal kit and maintenance gear.

Another photo for the modelers among you readers. Contrary to custom, no personal nickname was painted on the tanks from this particular platoon from the 3-66 Armor Battalion.



Stolen Pictures of an M1A2 Abrams

A Short Account Explaining the Difficulties Endured by Reporters in Iraq

The 2nd Brigade is the best-equipped unit of the 4th Infantry Division, being equipped with the latest version of the M1A2 tank and the updated Bradley IFV. We really wanted to get a photograph of the new M1A2, but after three weeks in Iraq, we had spent all of our money and were short of time. It was 15 December 2003 at 1530 hours. The rental car to drive back to Amman was booked for the following morning, and we could not miss the flight back to Europe on the night of the 16/17.

Anything could happen, especially on the road between Fallujah and Ramadi, which is one of the most dangerous in Iraq, from bands of resistance to troops to bandits, or a combination of the two. Several journalists were attacked in this region, and a friend who recently passed through this “alley of death” told us: “We came across a big 4x4 on the side of the road between Amman and Baghdad. The car was on fire and we could clearly make out the silhouette of burning bodies inside.” He added, “We didn’t stop.”

Our spirit of adventure was dampened by our travel obligations of the following morning. Nevertheless, I said to (fellow military journalist and traveling companion) Carl (Schulze), “Our trip was basically successful and we have plenty of pictures for Concord (Publications), but none of the M1A2. Before we celebrate the end of the trip, why don’t we make one last try?”

My German friend agreed. A quick look at the map showed that we were 60 kilometers (37 miles) from Ba’aqubah, the only place where we would have a chance of taking pictures of the desired tank . . . if we got the chance to see one on the road. So we quickly gave the order to Salaam, our fantastic Shia driver, “Quick! Quick, Salaam! Let’s get to Ba’qubah! We only have one hour of light left.”

Like a Panzer commander in Russia in 1941, Carl added, “Schnell! Schnell! Nach Ba’qubah!”

Without a word of discussion, Salaam launched his white and orange Toyota at full speed into the chaotic traffic on the Iraqi roads. The drive around the perimeter of northern Baghdad was a nightmare. I have witnessed a lot of battles, but sitting in the front seat of this taxi, I was terrified. I was more afraid on that afternoon than I was two days earlier when soldiers of the 101st Airborne (Air Assault) threatened us by menacingly aiming their M4s at our taxi.

After an hour of Indianapolis Speedway-style driving, we arrived in the southern suburb of Ba’qubah. The sun was very low on the horizon, shielded by heavy gray clouds. “Quick! Quick!” I urged. We only have twenty minutes of light.” At the entrance to the city, on the sight of an Iraqi Police checkpoint, we saw our target: an M1A2 from the 1-67 Armor. The important thing was not to stop suddenly. If we were to do that, the US troops would open fire on us with their machine gun in the belief that we were a suicide bomber, and the world’s special military press would lose a couple of its best members.

We passed the tank and stopped one hundred meters beyond, then slowly got out of the vehicle. Immediately, the Iraqi policemen pointed their AK-47s at us. We quickly said “Saafi, Saafi, Sataki” (Journalist, journalist, friend). We lost five minutes of precious light explaining our needs to them. The tank crew saw us speaking with the police and understood that we were not hostile. We made a dash straight for the tank. A young lieutenant jumped from his turret and said, “Hello, what do you want?”

“Good evening, sir,” I begin. “Would it be possible to take a quick picture of your beautiful M1A2? All we have is a photo of an M1A1, and the next few minutes offers us our only chance to do it.”

The young officer and his crew were very sympathetic. “O.K., no problem,” he said. “But wait. The tank should be in good condition.”

He gave an order, and the crew quickly removed an old tarpaulin, the remains of some cans of food, and some empty bottles from the front armor and turret top. This took about five minutes. Meanwhile, the disk of a pale winter sun had begun to disappear on the horizon.

“Excuse me, sir. For the picture, can we have the crew wear their flak jackets and helmets while sitting in their combat positions?” Carl asked. Their compliance burned up another two minutes.

We positioned ourselves at the front of the tank, adjusted the wide angle, and began to aim the visor when the young officer received a phone call.

“Wait a minute,” her says.

It was a routine message, but the lieutenant told his captain two funny journalists, a Frenchman and a German, wanted to take pictures of the M1A2. From the radio we heard, “Wait!”

Two minutes later, the lieutenant said, “Sorry, we need names, a media card, and accreditation. The captain needs to ask the Brigade HQ for authorization.”

Instinctively I pushed the release button of my camera and took **three bad pictures** of the tank in the dark. The lieutenant heard nothing because of his helmet. Carl, who was furious, declared, “Tell the captain that we have met with Colonel MacDonald, the Division PIO of the 4th ID, and he has authorized us to take pictures.”

The young lieutenant looked a little annoyed.

Five more minutes passed as they blabbed on the radio. The sun had now disappeared behind the horizon.

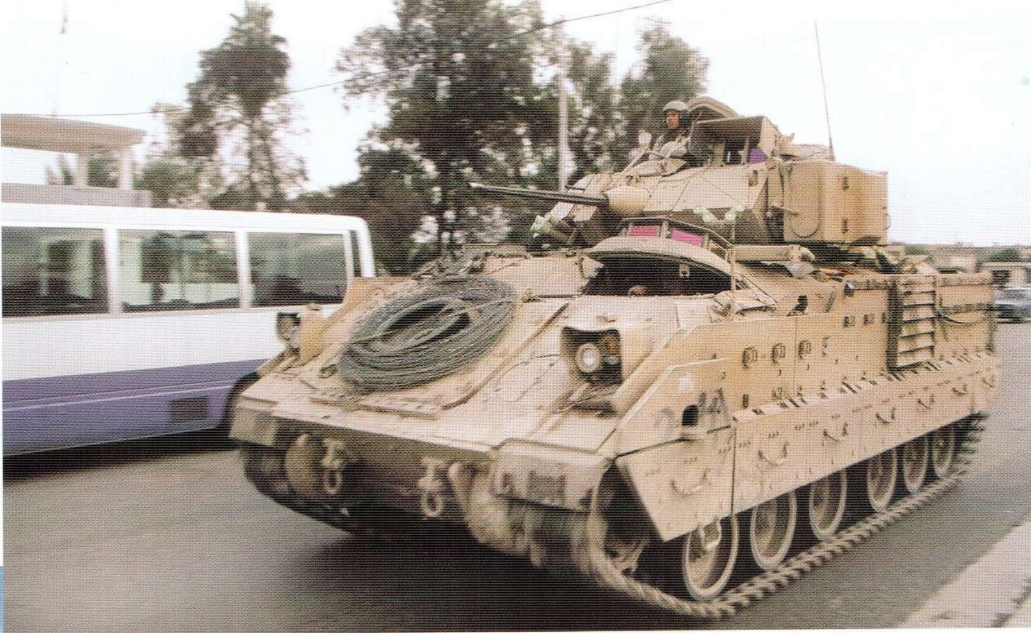
“Sorry,” the lieutenant said, “but the PIO is eating dinner. Don’t worry, we’ll contact him.”

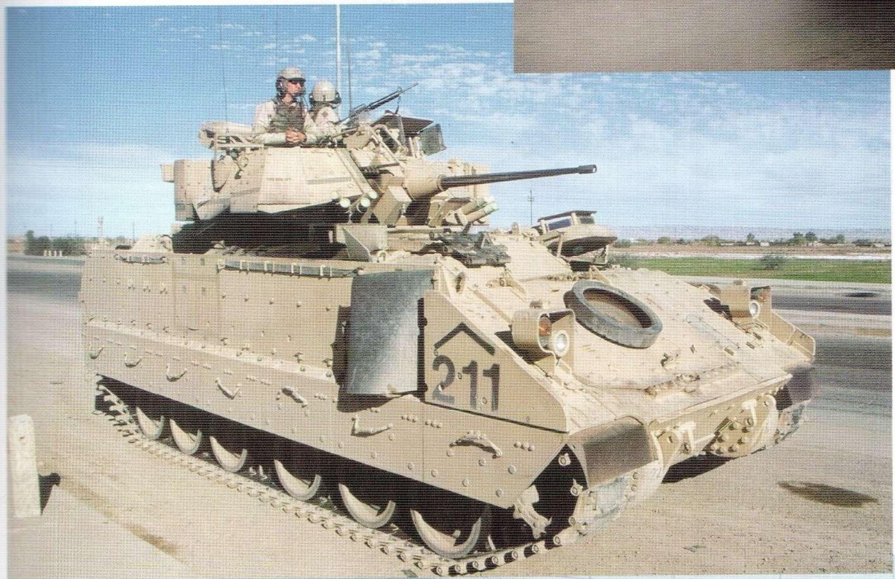
Twenty minutes passed, and we were still standing at the foot of the tank.

Salaam, our driver, arrived and said, “Sorry, Mister Yves and Carl. Dark come quickly now! Very, very dangerous! We must go back quickly to Baghdad before night! Very, very dangerous.”

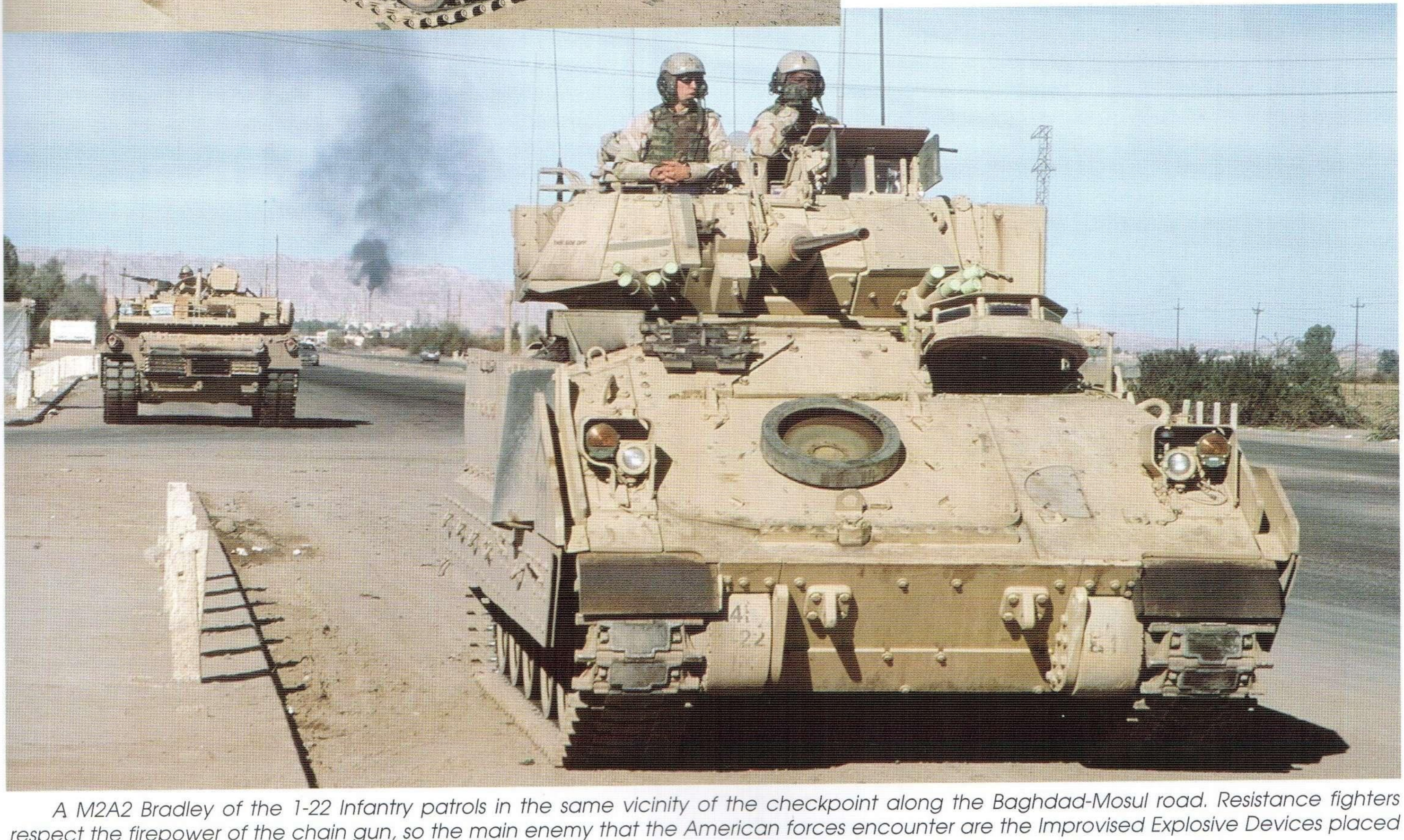
So, we shook the hands of the lieutenant and the crew. But we had nothing to offer except for a few crappy pictures of the M1A2 from the 1-67 Armor.

The 1-22 is the mechanized infantry battalion of the 1st Brigade, 4th Infantry Division.





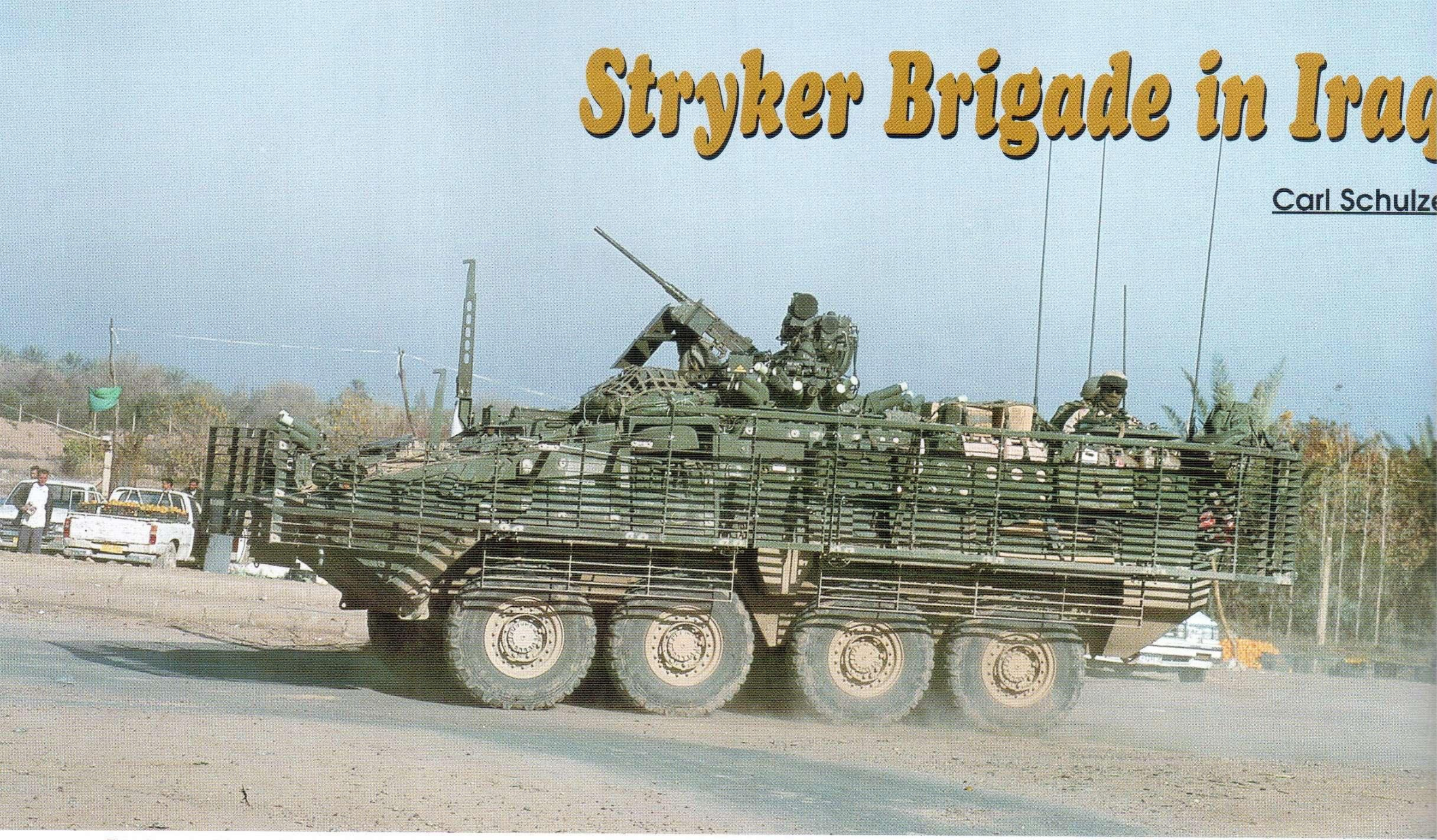
A platoon of M2A2 Bradleys from the 1-22 Infantry stops at the checkpoint. Note the chain gun and the grenade launchers.



A M2A2 Bradley of the 1-22 Infantry patrols in the same vicinity of the checkpoint along the Baghdad-Mosul road. Resistance fighters respect the firepower of the chain gun, so the main enemy that the American forces encounter are the Improvised Explosive Devices placed on the side of the road and detonated when a vehicle passes by.

Stryker Brigade in Iraq

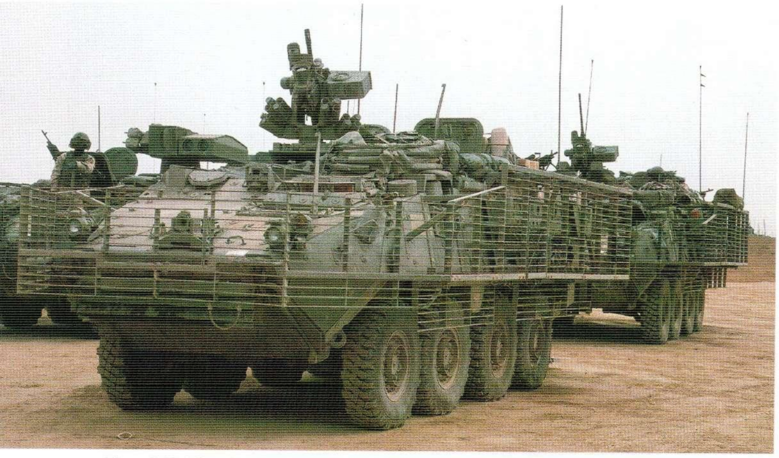
Carl Schulze



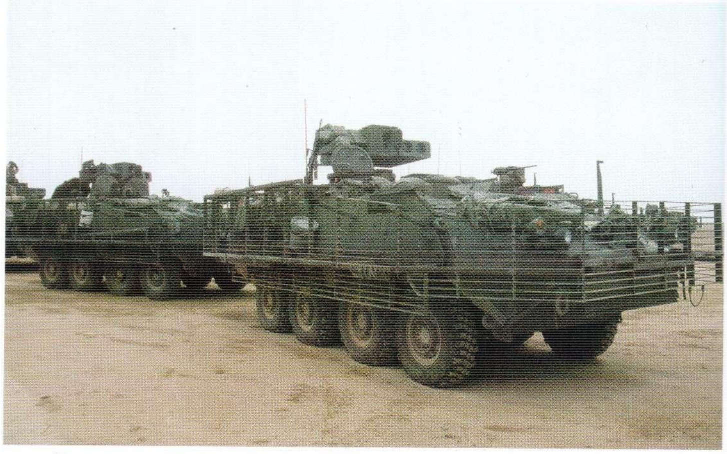
The heavy 19-ton Stryker ICV can reach a top speed of 100km/h (62 mph). The vehicle's armor protection kit consists of the vehicle's steel body and 132 ceramic tiles that provide the vehicle with the capability to withstand fire from infantry weapons up to 14.5mm. <None>

The road leading to a grove of palm trees is filled with armored vehicles facing to the left and right shoulders of the road and keeping combat distance between each other. From the open hatches above the troop compartments of the armored personnel carriers, soldiers armed with assault rifles carefully scan the thick undergrowth along the road for any sign of an enemy ambush. Other troops who have dismounted the vehicles via the armored personnel carrier's large rear doors move along the road in single file to a nearby village. Closely followed by their four APCs (armored personnel carriers), the troops of the lead platoon enter the main street of the village, aiming at every potential enemy ambush position. The 12.7mm machine guns of the vehicles cover the advance of the troops through the village. This time the lead platoon reaches the other side of the village without coming under fire. Once a security perimeter is established, the rest of the company's APCs pass through the village at high speed before the lead platoon mounts their vehicles and the troops carry on their presence patrol.

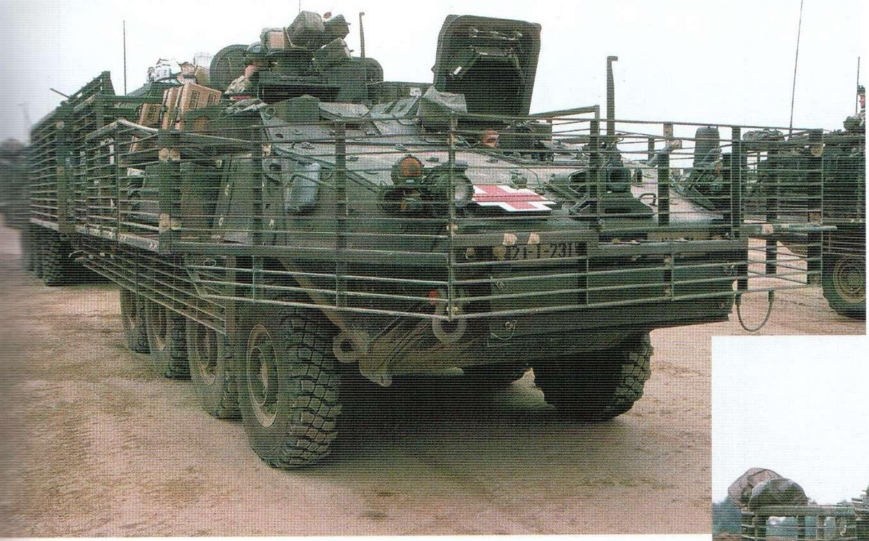
The scenario just described could well have been in Vietnam in the late 1960s, showing US troops with M113 Armored Personnel Carrier. In fact, the action involved one of the latest assets of the US Army, an Interim Brigade Combat Team (IBCT) equipped with the Stryker Interim Armored Vehicle, and it took place in Iraq near Samarra in December 2003. The troops belonged to the 3rd Brigade of the 2nd (US) Infantry Division, which is the first operational brigade of its kind.



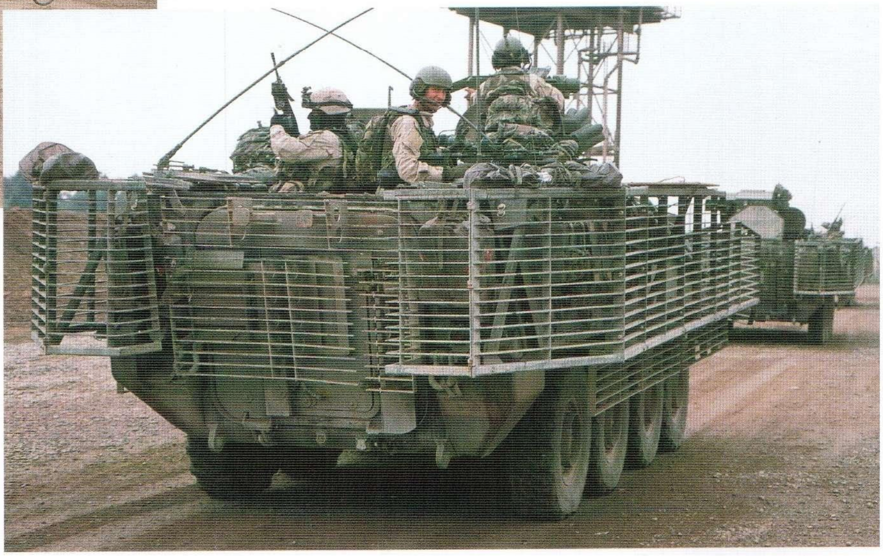
The M1126 Stryker Infantry Carrier Vehicle (ICV) is a 19-ton light, wheeled armored personnel carrier. With a crew consisting of a driver and commander, it can carry up to nine fully equipped infantrymen. The vehicle is armed with a "Kongsberg" Remote Weapon Station with a universal soft-mount cradle, which can be fitted with different weapons. The first vehicle in the picture is fitted with a 40mm Mk.19 automatic grenade launcher, while the second vehicle is fitted with a 12.7mm M2 HB machine gun.



To cope with the deadly RPG problem, all Strykers deployed on Operation "Iraqi Freedom" were fitted with an additional stand of armor called "Slad" armor, which took nine months to develop. The cage-type armor can detonate an RPG warhead before it reaches the vehicle's hull, thus preventing the warhead from boring through the hull. The full kit has a weight of 2361kg (5,200 pounds). The vehicles of the 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division were fitted with the Slad armor after they arrived in Kuwait.



The M1133 Stryker Medical Evacuation Vehicle (MEV) has a crew of three and can transport four patients on litters or six sitting ambulatory patients or a mixture of both.



Strykers of the 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division leave a camp near Balad. The vehicle closest to the camera is an M1126 Stryker Infantry Carrier Vehicle (ICV). The Slad armor, which was fitted to all Strykers deployed to Iraq, is clearly visible.

Interim Brigade Combat Team

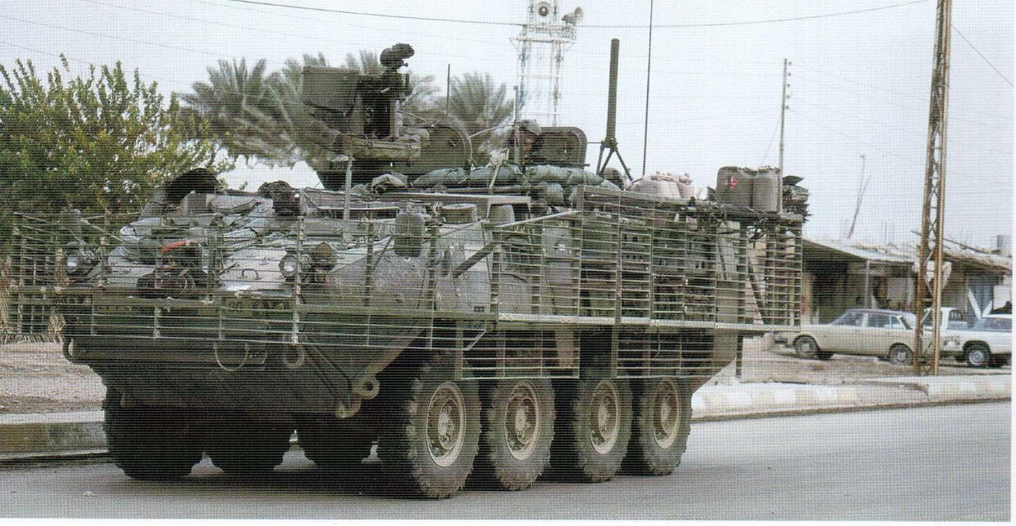
The Interim Brigade Combat Team was designed to close the gap between light and heavy units in the inventory of the US forces. At the same time, the IBCT can fill the gap between an early-entry force and heavier follow-on forces. In order to fulfill these missions, the IBCTs are lethal, agile and mobile enough to dominate combat for a certain time. Until a future combat system is available, the IBCTs will be equipped with the Stryker IAV (Interim Armored Vehicle). Each brigade's new equipment will cost an estimated $1.5 billion. The IBCT is a full-spectrum, wheeled, combat force that can be deployed in every operational environment against all projected threats. Due to the recent geopolitical and world security developments, the main operational focus during the development of the IBCT concept was on small-scale contingency operations in complex and urban terrain, confronting low-end and mid-range threats that may employ both conventional and asymmetric capabilities. The new interim design enables the US Army to deploy brigades faster, and be ready to fight upon arrival. The Army had been planning this transformation since October 1999 when a new vision for the Army was revealed.

The IBCTs feature significantly a different organization from the Army's current brigade structure. The IBCT is a divisional brigade designed to optimize its organizational effectiveness and to balance the traditional domains of lethality, mobility, and survivability with the domains required for responsiveness, deployability, sustainability, and a reduced in-theater footprint. Its two core qualities are its high mobility (strategic, operational, and tactical) and its ability to achieve decisive action through a dismounted infantry assault. Each brigade consists primarily of three infantry battalions, an artillery battalion and a reconnaissance battalion. The reconnaissance battalion, known as the RSTA Squadron (Reconnaissance, Surveillance, Targeting and Acquisition) will significantly increase the intelligence-gathering capability of the brigade.

The establishment of the IBCTs was strongly influenced by the experiences during joint contingency operations in the 1990's, such as Somalia, Bosnia, and Kosovo, as well as through knowledge gained by "Force XXI" experiments. It was during these that several critical shortcomings in the Army were discovered. The heavy forces were too heavy, took too long to deploy, and were too difficult to maneuver in areas of the world where they might have to operate; the light forces were too light and lacked staying power and lethality if they were deployed into an environment where they might face an armored threat. Also, future opponents would not give the American military a long lead time to deploy and would attempt to deny air strips and ports that the United States traditionally depended upon to deploy military forces.

The IBCTs are part of the "Strike Force" concept born out of the 1999 Army Strategic Planning Guidance (ASPG), which asks the Army of the future to become more strategically responsive. The "Strike Force" concept asks for forces that can be deployed globally with a mission-tailored force package of combat, combat support, and combat-service support forces to conduct strategically responsive operations in support of joint contingencies. With the IBCTs, the Army developed the capability to deploy a brigade combat team anywhere in the world within 96 hours after liftoff, while a division could be on the ground in 120 hours.

Soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment "Tomahawk", who have been transported on a Stryker vehicle, keep a sharp eye out for danger as they patrol in a section of Sunni territory.



The M1131 Stryker Fire Support Vehicle is equipped with an enhanced surveillance, target identification, target designation, and communication equipment. This includes a combat laser designation system for the guidance of precision-guided weapons, as well as HF radio sets. The fire support team (FIST) on board the Stryker FSV consists of a driver, the fire support officer, the fire support NCO, and a fire support specialist.

While the IBCTs are currently equipped with the Stryker Interim Armored Vehicles, an off-the-shelf option, future ICBTs will be equipped with the future combat system. While the Stryker IAV cannot replace the M-1 tank and the M-2 Bradley infantry fighting vehicle, the future combat system is designed to do so. The future combat system will have the same lethality and survivability but will only have a weight of 20 tons.

Composition of 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division (Arrowhead Brigade)

Based at Fort Lewis, Washington, the 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, nicknamed "Arrowhead" Brigade, is the first operational IBCT. The brigade has a combat strength of around 3,600 soldiers. The Interim Brigade Combat Team consists of the following units:

- 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment "Tomahawk"
- 2nd Battalion, 3rd Infantry Regiment
- 5th Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment
- 1st Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment
- 1st Battalion, 37th Field Artillery Regiment
- 334th Signal Company
- 18th Engineer Company
- 209th Military Intelligence Company
- 296th Field Support Battalion
- C/52 Anti-Tank Company
- Charlie Battery, 5th Air Defense Artillery Battalion

Each of the three infantry battalions of the IBCT is equipped with 65 Stryker IAVs in different variants. The 690-strong battalions are divided into a headquarters and headquarters company (HHC) and three infantry companies. The HHC consists of the battalion headquarters element, a reconnaissance platoon, a mortar platoon with four M1129 Stryker Mortar Carriers with 120mm and 81mm mortars, and a sniper squad equipped with the M24 sniper rifle.

The infantry companies within the infantry battalions of the IBCT are called combined arms companies and consist of an HQ element, three infantry platoons, a mortar platoon, and (once the Mobile Gun System is available) a mobile gun platoon. Currently these platoons are equipped with three M1134 Anti-Tank Guided Missile Vehicles (ATGM) armed with the TOW anti-tank missile system. Also integral parts of the company are a sniper team and a forward observer team.

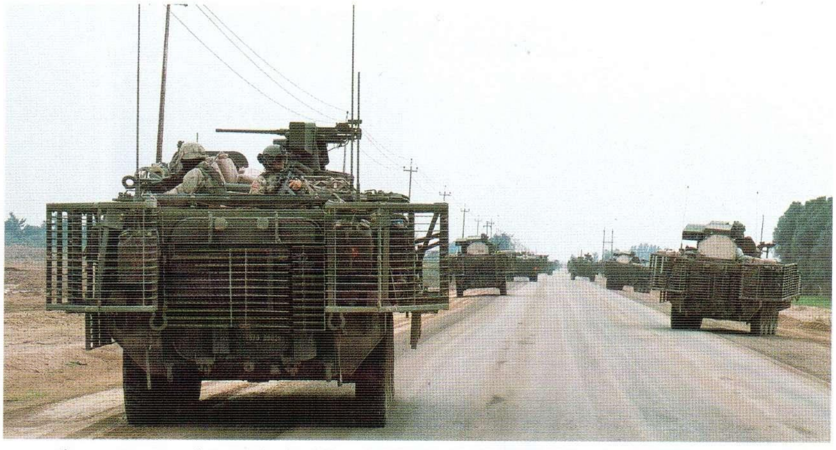
The infantry platoons are equipped with four M1126 Stryker IAV Infantry Carrier Vehicles. Three of these carry nine-man rifle squads, while the fourth carries a seven-man weapon squad. The soldiers within the squad are armed with the 5.56mm M4A1 carbine, the 5.56mm M246 SAW, and the 84mm M136 light anti-armor weapon. Two of the M4A1 carbines in each section are fitted with the 40mm M203 grenade launcher.

Each platoon is also equipped with three JAVELIN advanced anti-tank weapon systems. The mortar platoon is equipped with two M1129 Mortar Carriers (MC) equipped with the 120mm M121 mortar and carrying an additional 60mm mortar. The cavalry squadron of the brigade, which consists of 450 soldiers, can field 53 Stryker IAVs. It is also equipped with the "Shadow" UAV. The three batteries in the brigade's artillery battalion field the 155mm M198 towed howitzer. Each battery is equipped with six guns. The engineer company is equipped with the Stryker IAV ESV and the DEUCE. The Stryker IAV ESV can be fitted with a mine plough or a mine roller.

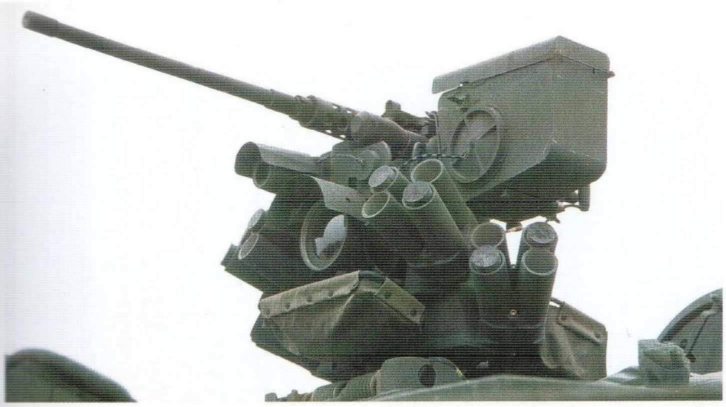
Six IBCTs for the US Army

Although 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division is the first operational Interim Brigade Combat Team, others will follow. Currently, US plans include the construction of six Stryker-equipped IBCTs, the last of which will be operational by 2010. The second IBCT to be operational is the 1st Brigade, 25th Infantry Division, which is scheduled to be operational in

This photo provides a look into the troop compartment of a M1126 Stryker ICV.



A company-size patrol of the 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment on patrol in the Balad region. Behind the M1126 Stryker Infantry Carrier Vehicle (ICV) in the foreground are three M1134 Stryker Anti-Tank Guided Missile Vehicles (ATGM), which can be recognized by their Elevated TOW System (ETS).



The Kongsberg Remote Weapon Station (RWS) can be fitted either with a 40mm Mk.19 automatic grenade launcher or like here with a 12.7mm M2 HB machine gun in its universal soft-mount cradle. Also fitted to the RWS are four 66mm M6 smoke grenade launchers, each with four barrels. The RWS is operated from under armor, and the sighting is fitted with equipment consisting of a thermal imager and video camera system.

In addition to their 7.62mm M24 sniper rifles, the snipers of the IBCT use the 7.62mm M21 sniper rifle. The gas-operated automatic weapon was recently reintroduced into the US Army's inventory in order to provide snipers on a short range with a weapon with a higher rate of fire then possible with the bolt-action M24 sniper rifle.

the spring of 2004. The brigade is also based in Fort Lewis, Washington. Other units that will be converted are the following:

- 172nd Infantry Brigade, Fort Wainwright , Alaska, operational by 2005.
- 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment, Fort Polk, Louisiana, operational by 2006. It looks like these will become a unique Stryker unit that will remain a cavalry unit by keeping its helicopter asset.
- 2nd Brigade, 25th Infantry Division, Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, operational by 2006.
- 56th Brigade, 26th Infantry Division, Pennsylvania National Guard, Philadelphia, operational by 2010.

In 2007, the US Army plans to shift one of the two Fort Lewis, Washington-based Stryker Brigade Combat Teams to Europe. Most certainly the brigade will be based in Germany. But due to recent announcements that the bulk of the US forces based in Germany will be withdrawn, the move of a Stryker Brigade to Germany is not certain.

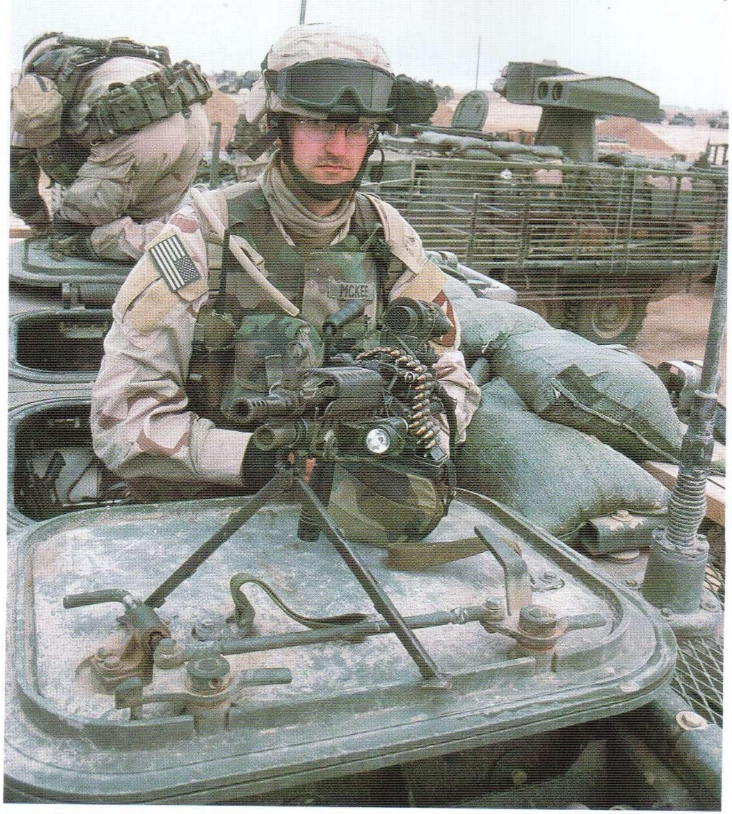
Description of the Stryker Interim Armored Vehicle

The Stryker Interim Armored Vehicle (IAV) is also known as the Light Armored Vehicle III (LAV III). The LAV III itself is based on the MOWAG Piranha III. In February the vehicle was named after Specialist 4 Robert F. Stryker, who received the Medal of Honor for his actions during the Vietnam War, and Private first class Stuart S. Stryker, who received the award for his actions during World War II. Both men were killed in action and were not related to each other.

The Stryker IAV is a full-time four-wheel drive/selectively eight-wheel drive wheeled armored vehicle. The Stryker IAV Infantry Carrier Vehicle has a combat weight of 19 tons and a crew of two soldiers, the vehicle commander and the driver. The hull of the Stryker IAV is made of 160 steel body panels that are welded together. The driver is seated in the modern cockpit at the front left of the chassis. He can reach his position via a large single-piece hatch that is opened vertically. The driver has three M17 periscopes mounted in the hatch for driving under armored

This soldier of A Company, 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment is armed with a 5.56mm M4A1 carbine fitted with ACOG reflex sight and AN/PEQ-4 IR Pointer/Illuminator.

Troops of A Company, 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment have dismounted in a small village north of Balad. In addition to their advanced combat uniforms, the troops wear Interceptor Body Armor (IBA). The IBA here is worn without the lower protection panel, collar and throat protection. The soldier in the center of the picture is armed with a 5.56mm M4A1 carbine fitted with an M203 40mm grenade launcher, AN/PEQ-4 IR Pointer/Illuminator and a visible light.



This light machine gunner belongs to an infantry squad of A Company, 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment. He is standing in an open hatch, one of the two located above the troop compartment. He is armed with the 5.56mm M249 Squad Assault Weapon. Note that he is wearing the new ballistic helmet called the Advanced Combat Helmet, which is half a pound lighter than the older model. In addition, the new helmet features a new, more comfortable foam nape padding. For added stability, its chinstrap connects at four points instead of two like on the old helmet.

protection. A Raytheon AN/VAS-5 Driver Vision Enhancer (DVE) can be fitted for night operations.

The vehicle's engine compartment is situated at the front right of chassis. The Stryker IAV is powered by a 350hp 7.2-liter Caterpillar 3126 I6 turbo-charged, six-cylinder, diesel engine. The engine is connected to an Allison MD 3560P automatic transmission with six forward gears and one reverse gear. The powertrain consists of a two-speed transfer case and four automotive differentials. The suspension of the eight-wheel vehicle, which is of the independent hydro-pneumatic type, contains a height management system. The brake system consists of power brakes and ABS on the rear three axles.

The commander's station is equipped with seven M45 periscopes and a thermal imager display with video camera. In the center of the vehicle is mounted the Kongsberg Remote Weapon Station (RWS). The RWS can be fitted either with a 40mm Mk.19 automatic grenade launcher or a 12.7mm M2 HB machine gun in its universal soft-mount cradle. Also fitted to the RWS are four 66mm M6 smoke grenade launchers. Operated from under armor, the RWS is fitted with a thermal imager and video camera system for sighting.

The large troop compartment is situated in the rear of the vehicle. The troops enter and leave the troop compartment via a large power-operated rear ramp. Inside the troop compartment there is space for up to nine fully equipped infantrymen and their supplies. The troops are seated along the walls of the hull facing inward. Two single-piece hatches, which open to the left and right, are situated in the roof above the troop compartment. The hatches are big enough to allow a soldier to stand in the open in each one and use its weapon on patrols.

A close-up of an infantryman aiming his 5.56mm M4A1 carbine. His head is covered with the new Advanced Combat Helmet. Note also his gloves.

The Stryker IAV is fitted with the FBCB 2 (Force XXI Battle Command Brigade and Below) digital communications system. The FBCB 2 includes the Raytheon AN/TSQ-158 Enhanced Position Location Reporting System (EPLRS). The FCBC 2 allows vehicle commanders to communicate with text messages and transmit tactical information by marking them on a digital map. Vital tactical information like minefields and enemy positions, together with the positions of own troops, are shown on the map.

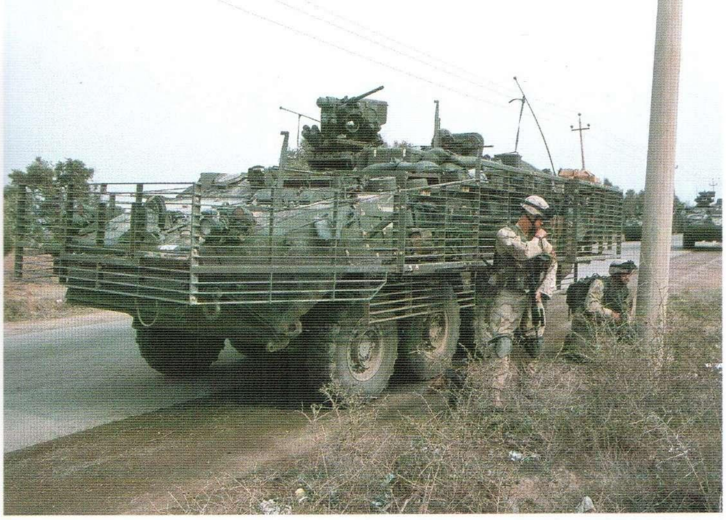
A tire inflation system is fitted to the Stryker IAV to enhance the vehicle mobility when moving on different types of soil such as sand, mud and snow. The tires can be inflated or deflated by the driver from inside the vehicle. As a further aid to maintaining mobility in combat situations, the Stryker IAV is fitted with two run-flat tires on the first and last axle on each side.

The Stryker IAV has a built-in fire suppression system (FM 2000 for the troop compartment and two FM 25s for the engine compartment), a self-recovery winch, and an NBC protection system that consists of NBC detectors and ventilated face masks.

Stryker IAV Armor Protection

The Stryker's armor protection kit consists of the vehicle's steel body and 132 ceramic tiles that provide the vehicle with the capability of withstanding fire from infantry weapons up to 14.5mm. Made by the German company IBD, the tiles are of the Mexus 2 type. However, these

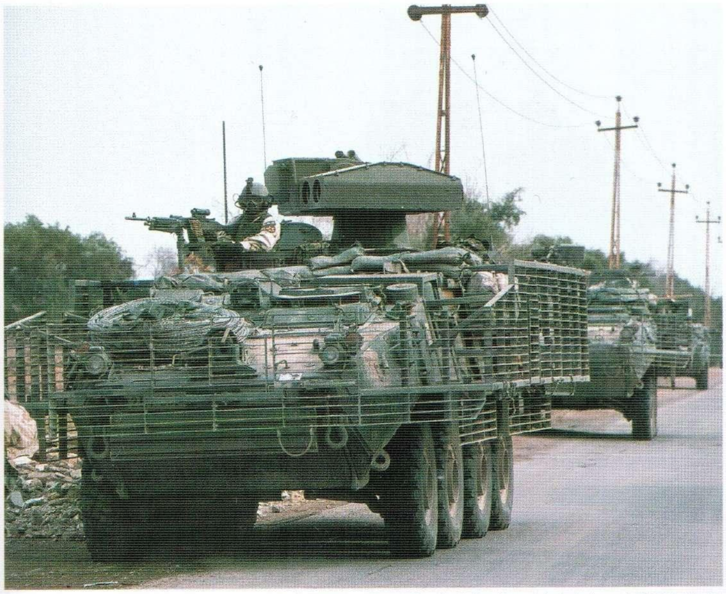
In addition to his 5.56mm M4A1 carbine, this IBCT trooper is armed with a 12-gauge pump shotgun. Pump shotguns are widely used by US troops in Iraq as a universal key for doors.



The M1129 Stryker Mortar Carrier (MC) can only be distinguished from the Infantry Carrier Vehicle by the mortar base plate mounted on the outside left rear of the hull. The vehicle is equipped with a 120mm M121 mortar that has to be dismounted for firing. Inside the vehicle are carried 60 120mm rounds for the weapon. Like the ICV, the vehicle is fitted with the "Kongsberg" Remote Weapon Station. Four M1129 Stryker MCs operate in the mortar platoon of an IBCT infantry battalion, while each of the three rifle platoons is equipped with additional two mortar carriers, which makes a total of 10 M1129 Stryker MCs in the battalion.

leave the vehicle vulnerable to attack from the deadly RPG-7 anti-tank weapon that is widely used by the Iraqi resistance force. In fact RPG attacks are responsible for the deaths pf dozens of US soldiers in Iraq.

To cope with the RPG problem, all Strykers deployed on Operation "Iraqi Freedom" were fitted with an additional stand of armor called Slad Armor. This armor, which looks like a large cage fitted around the vehicle, will detonate the deadly RPG warhead before it can reach the vehicle's hull. Using a chemical reaction, it prevents the warhead from boring through the hull and unleashing its deadly effect. Development of the Slad armor took nine months, and the full kit has a weight of 2361kg (5,200 lb.). Currently, the US Army together with General Dynamics are developing a new plate armor for the Stryker that will be enable it to take the deadly punch of an RPG. This armor will weigh approximately 3632kg (8,000 lb.). With the new armor fitted, the Slad armor will be removed and the Stryker will regain its original dimensions. But the new armor will not be operational before 2005 when the third planned Stryker brigade will be equipped with their vehicles.



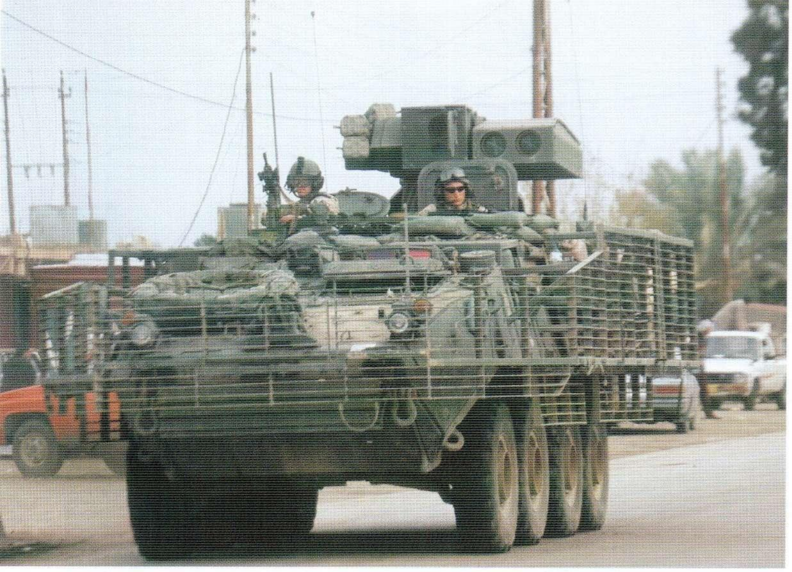
The M1134 Stryker Anti-Tank Guided Missile Vehicle (ATGM) is fitted with the Elevated TOW System (ETS) and is armed with the TOW 2B anti-tank guided weapon system.

Here a member of A Company, 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment patrols close to an M1126 Stryker ICV while his unit passes through a Iraqi village. He is armed with a 5.56mm M249 Squad Assault Weapon fitted with a Wildcat optical combat sight.

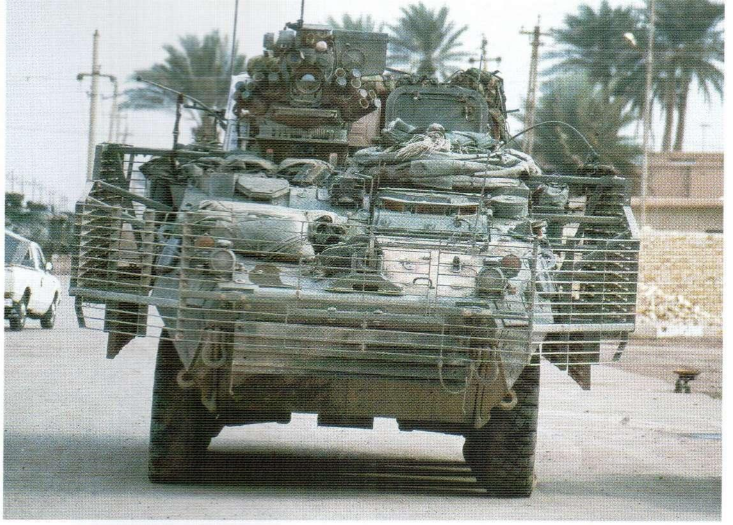
Stryker IAV Variants

The Stryker IAV family consists of two basic variants, the Infantry Carrier Vehicle and the Mobile Gun System. The Infantry Carrier Vehicle is built in nine different versions, bringing the number of Stryker family vehicles up to ten. They are:

- M1126 Infantry Carrier Vehicle (ICV): The vehicle is fitted with a "Kongsberg" Remote Weapon Station with a universal soft-mount cradle, which can be fitted with either a 40mm Mk.19 automatic grenade launcher or a .50 M2 HB machine gun. In addition, the weapon station is fitted with a bank of four M6 smoke grenade launchers. The vehicle has a two-man crew and can transport up to nine fully equipped infantrymen in the large troop compartment in the rear. The troops enter and leave the vehicle via the large power-operated rear ramp.
- M1127 Reconnaissance Vehicle (RV): The vehicle has a crew of six soldiers and can carry one additional soldier. The vehicle is equipped with reconnaissance and surveillance equipment, and its crew can also gather information during dismounted operations. The soldiers of the scout elements benefit from the reduced noise level of the wheeled Stryker IAV, which can be described as "stealth."
- M1129 Mortar Carrier (MC): The vehicle is equipped with a 120mm M121 mortar, which has to be dismounted for firing. Sixty 120mm rounds for the weapon are carried inside the vehicle. The ammunition range includes HE, illumination, IR illumination, smoke, precision guided, and Dual Purpose Improve Conventional Munitions (DPICM). In addition to the 120mm mortar on the M1129 Mortar Carrier, a 60mm mortar with ammunition is carried. The M1129 Mortar Carrier has a crew of five soldiers. Like the ICV, the vehicle is fitted with the "Kongsberg" Remote Weapon Station.
- M1130 Command Vehicle (CV): Armed with a 12.7mm M2 HB machine gun, the Stryker CV is stuffed with communication and command equipment, including SINCGARS radios and the FBCB 2 (Force XXI Battle Command Brigade and Below) digital communications system. A large video display terminal allows the



With its impressive "cage" of Slad armor and the Elevated TOW System (ETS), the large M1134 Stryker ATGM offers an imposing sight as it patrols.

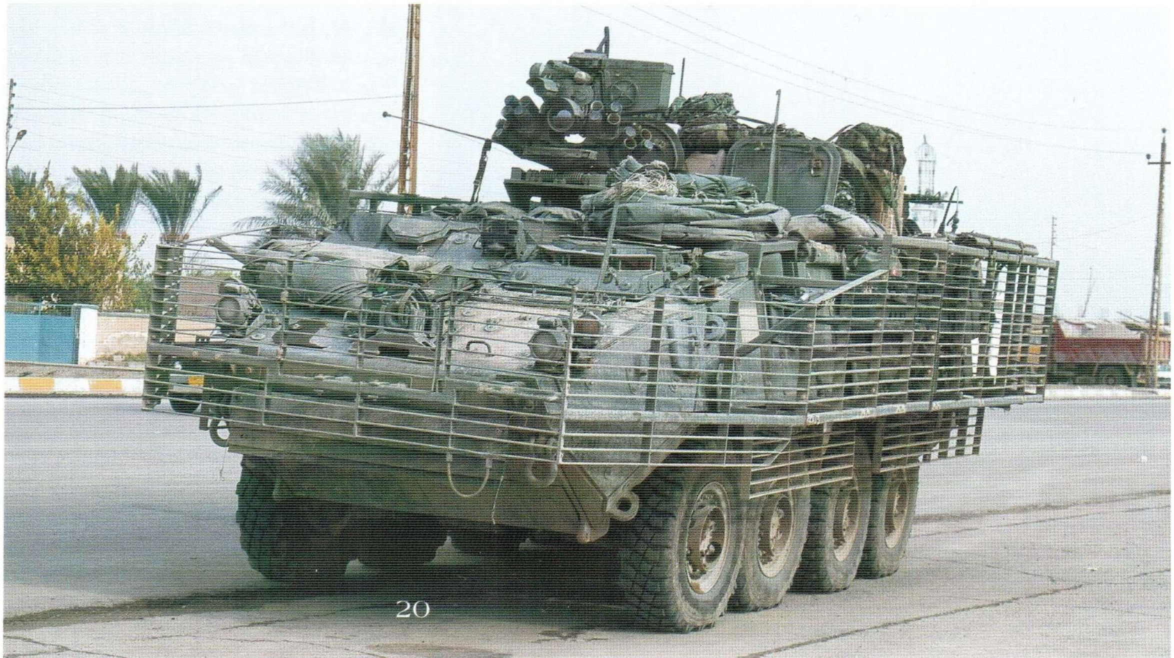


An M1126 Stryker Infantry Carrier Vehicle (ICV) of A Company, 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment moves to a village south of Samarra. The picture was taken a day before the 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division took part in Operation "Ivy Blizzard". The vehicle is armed with the 40mm Mk.19 automatic grenade launcher.

commander to follow the battle in real time.

- M1132 Engineer Squad Vehicle (ESV): The vehicle can be fitted with a mine plough or a mine roller. Inside the vehicle, obstacle neutralization equipment, lane marking equipment and mine detection devices are carried. Like the ICV, the vehicle is fitted with a "Kongsberg" Remote Weapon Station. The ESV enables the engineer squads to closely follow the infantry during a battle. The vehicle can tow a trailer fitted with a mine-clearing line charge.
- M1131 Fire Support Vehicle (FSV): The FSV is equipped with an enhanced surveillance, target identification, target designation, and communication equipment. This includes a combat laser designation system for the guidance of precision-guided weapons. The fire support team (FIST) on board the Stryker FSV consists of a driver, the fire support officer, the fire support NCO, and a fire support specialist.
- M1134 Anti-Tank Guided Missile Vehicle (ATGM): The vehicle is fitted with the Elevated TOW System (ETS) and uses the TOW 2B anti-tank guided weapon system. The system is elevated 0.5 meters over the vehicle's chassis and its head is fitted with two launcher tubes. A "Bunker Buster" warhead will be available for the IBCTs in the near future. The vehicle has a crew of three.
- M1133 Medical Evacuation Vehicle (MEV): The vehicle, which has a crew of three, can transport four patients on litters or six sitting ambulatory patients. The vehicle is fitted with an automatic litter-lifting system and there is enough space above the litters to allow the medics to do their work inside the vehicle.
- M1135 NBC Reconnaissance Vehicle (NBCRV): The vehicle is fitted with an NBC detection package including a mass spectrometer, radiation monitor, M21 remote sensing agent alarm system, a sampling system, and meteorological sensor. The Stryker M1135 NBCRV will replace the M93A1 "Fox" in the US Army's inventory.
- M1128 Mobile Gun System (MGS): The vehicle is fitted with a fully stabilized shoot-on-the-move Low Profile Turret that is armed with a 105mm M68A1 cannon. The gun is loaded by a fully automated ammunition loading and replenishing system. A total of 18 rounds for the main armament of the vehicle are carried inside the vehicle. Ammunition includes high explosive, high explosive plastic, kinetic energy, and high explosive anti-tank rounds. The 105mm M68A1 gun with the automatic loader is able to fire up to ten rounds a minute. The Mobile Gun System is additionally armed with a 12.7mm M2 HB machine gun and a 7.62mm M240 machine gun. Some 3400 rounds are carried for the 7.62mm machine gun and 12.7mm ammunition is carried for the 12.5mm machine gun. The Mobile Gun System is also fitted with banks of four M6 smoke grenade launchers. The gunner of the Mobile Gun System has a computer modular sight with a dual field of view and daytime and thermal channels.

The US Army has signed a contract worth $4 billion to produce 2,131 Stryker IAVs. The six planned Interim Brigade Combat Teams will be equipped with the vehicles. Each of the brigades will have more than 300 IAVs. Except for the Mobile Gun System and the NBC Reconnaissance Vehicle, all Stryker IAV family variants are currently fielded in Iraq in the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division. The brigade has a total

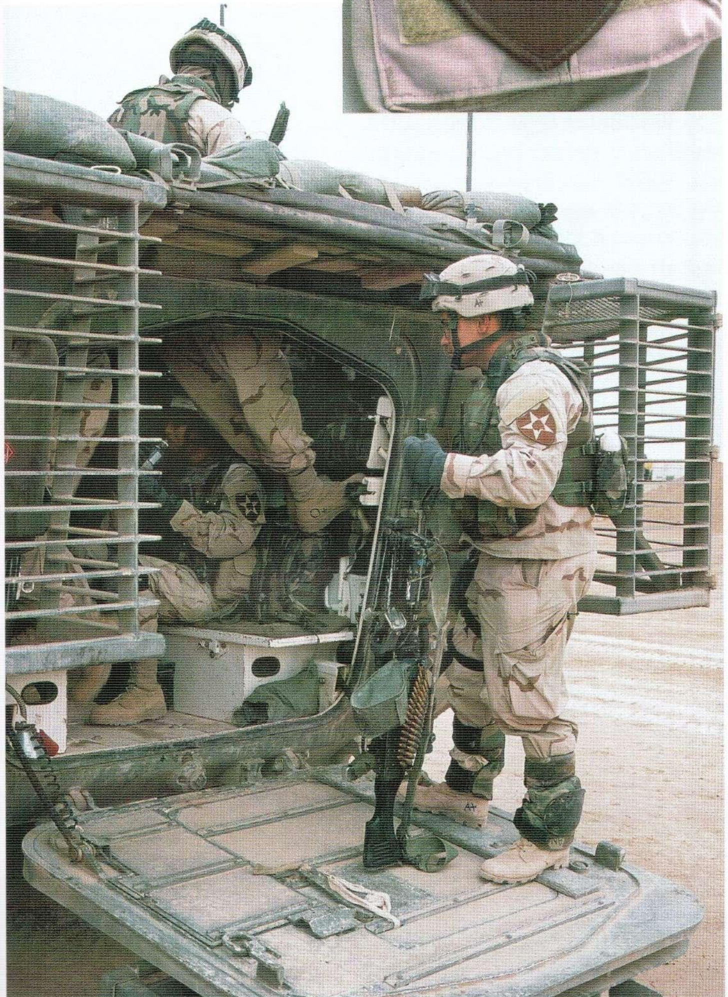


This M1126 Stryker Infantry Carrier Vehicle (ICV) belongs to A Company, 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment. The ICV is armed with the "Kongsberg" Remote Weapon Station with a universal soft-mount cradle, which can be fitted with different weapons. A Mk.19 40mm automatic grenade launcher has been fitted in this case.

This photograph provides a good profile look at several Stryker vehicles. These particular Stryker vehicles are armed either with a .50-caliber M2 HB machine gun or a Mk.19 40mm grenade launcher.

A frontal view of an M1126 Stryker ICV armed with a .50-caliber M2 HB machine gun.

The soldiers of the 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division all wear the division's famous "Indian Head" badge on their left sleeve.



The infantrymen enter the troop compartment of the M1126 Stryker Infantry Carrier Vehicle (ICV) through a large power-operated rear door. Inside the troop compartment, the nine-man infantry squad is seated on two benches along the hull facing inwards.

of 309 vehicles deployed to Iraq. The remaining two variants will enter service in 2004.

Air Mobility

One of the key factors in the Stryker doctrine is the rapid deployment capability of the units equipped with the Stryker. Certainly the fastest way to deploy troops worldwide is by transport aircraft. Due to its relatively low combat weight of some 18 tons (depending on the variant), a single Stryker can be transported with a C-130J Hercules transport aircraft. Other transport aircraft of the US Air Force that can transport the Stryker are the C-17 Globemaster III (four vehicles) and the C-5Y Galaxy (seven vehicles). While the latter can be used to transport Strykers over a long distance, the C-130J Hercules will be used to transport Strykers and their crews into hot landing zones, with a short landing and takeoff space.

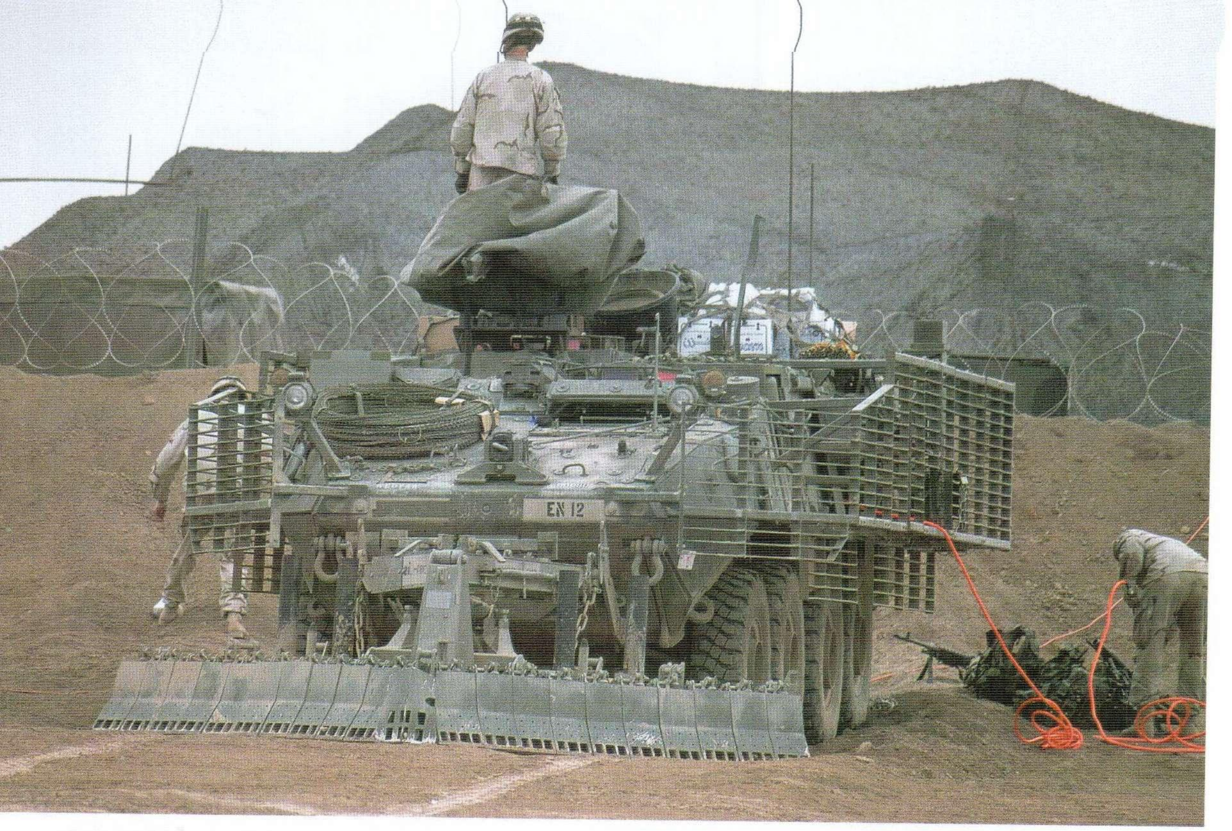
When carried in a C-130J Hercules transport aircraft, the Stryker is secured with 22 heavy-duty chains. The first time the Stryker and its crews were tactically deployed by a C-130 J Hercules was during an exercise in April 2002. During the exercise, ten Strykers were loaded into C-130 J Hercules aircraft at the Southern California Logistics Airport near Victorville and then delivered to Bicycle Lake Landing Zone, a dirt landing strip at the National Training Center, Fort Irwin, California.

The initial flight certification of the US Air Force was granted to the Stryker Interim Armored Vehicle in April 2003 after intensive trials. However, the vehicle is too wide to accommodate the 14-inch safety aisle around all sides of the vehicle, which the Air Force requires the loadmaster to provide. In addition, only a portion of its crew may fly in the same aircraft. During exercises, Stryker Infantry Carrier Vehicles required multiple alterations to fit into a C-130. In addition to two smoke grenade launchers, the following parts had to be removed: All antennas, a left rear bracket that blocked egress over the top of the vehicle, the Remote Weapons System, and the third road wheel's bump-stop. Reassemble upon landing took as long as 17 minutes. In order to deploy a whole Stryker IBCT with its 319 Stryker IAV, 160 C-17 transport aircraft sorties are required.

Stryker for the Canadian Army

Recently Canada's Ministry of Defense announced that it will buy 60 Strykers, most of them in the Mobile Gun System Version armed with the 105mm tank gun. The vehicles will replace the Canadian Leopard C2 Main Battle Tank fleet and be used to provide battlefield gunfire. The purchase is the result of the 2000 declaration of the Canadian MOD that the Leopard C2 tank was obsolete and that the era of tank warfare was over.

The tank was to be replaced with a modern mobile, armored, direct-fire-support vehicle. However, tests conducted in 1998 by the Canadian Army that were carried out on computer simulators showed that Stryker will hardly be able to replace a tank in a full-scale war scenario. The Stryker's basic problems are the vehicle's cross-country capabilities and its vulnerability due to its relatively low armor level when compared with



This M1132 Stryker Engineer Squad Vehicle (ESV) is fitted with a track-wide mine plough. Obstacle neutralization equipment, lane marking equipment and mine detection devices are carried inside the vehicle. Like the ICV, the M1132 Stryker ESV is fitted with the "Kongsberg" Remote Weapon Station, which is covered here.

modern main battle tanks. In addition, the Stryker Mobile Gun System is still under development, and the problem of absorbing the recoil of the 105mm gun by the chassis has not yet been solved.

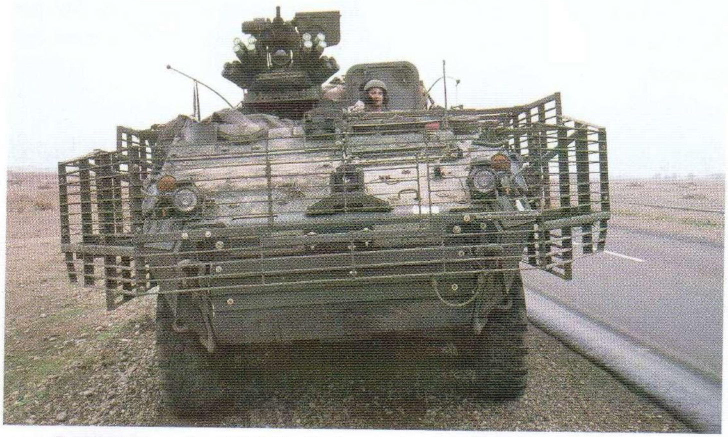
"Arrowhead Brigade" History

The history of the 3rd Brigade can be traced back to 11 August 1917, when the unit was established as the 1st Provisional Brigade in Syracuse, New York. Shortly afterward, on 22 September 1917, the unit was designated as Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3rd Infantry Brigade, and was assigned to the 2nd Infantry Division. In October of that same year, the brigade was sent to France where it saw heavy fighting as part of the American Expeditionary Force.

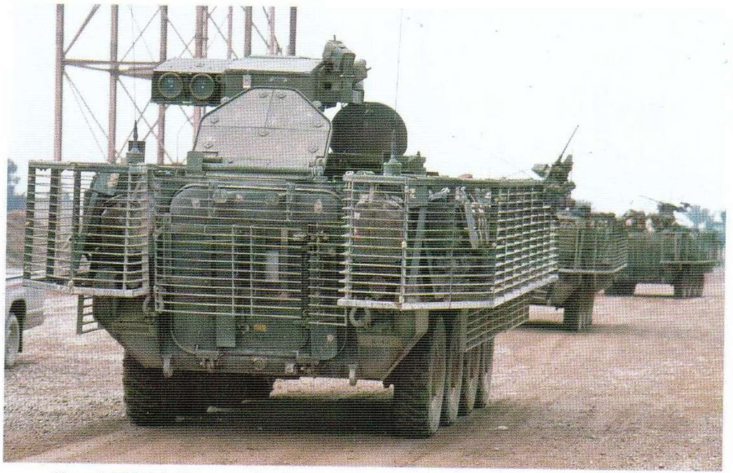
The 3rd Brigade fought in many battles in France, including the battles of Chateau Thierry, St. Michial Salient, and Meuse-Argonne. In World War I, the 3rd Brigade earned six battle streamers for their participation in the major campaigns of Aisne, Aisne-Marne, Lorraine 1918, France 1918, St Mihiel, and Meuse-Argonne. In addition, the brigade was awarded four French Croix de Guerre. In memory of this, a yellow and green *fourragère* (shoulder lanyard) is still worn on the left shoulder of every soldier assigned to the brigade.

After being part of the US Army occupation forces in Germany, the Brigade returned to its home at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, in late 1919 and was deactivated on 9 October 1939. On 1 February 1963, following its reactivation, the 3rd Brigade was redesignated to the 2nd Infantry Division at Fort Benning, Georgia. In July 1965, the brigade moved to Korea, where the unit was based up to deactivation in 1992. The mission of the brigade was to guard the western corridor. During its deployment to Korea, the brigade was involved in countless engagements with infiltrators. One took place in April 1967 when six North Korean agents were killed and two were captured near guard post Lucy. Between 1967 and 1969, over 394 incidents occurred, including firefights and intrusion attempts.

On 29 March 1995, the 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division was reactivated at Fort Lewis, Washington, as part of I Corps. At this time, the brigade was an armor-heavy unit consisting of two armored battalions with M1 Abrams MBTs and one armored infantry battalion with M2 Bradley IFVs, as well as a support unit package. In April 2000, the Army officially began the transformation of the first of two brigades at Fort Lewis,

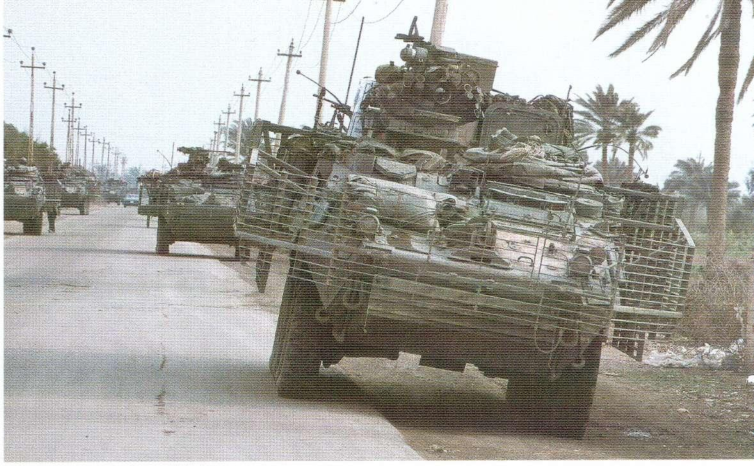


Front view of a M1126 Stryker Infantry Carrier Vehicle. To cope with the RPG problem, all Strykers deployed on Operation "Iraqi Freedom" were fitted with an additional stand of armor called Slad armor.



The M1134 Stryker Anti-Tank Guided Missile Vehicle has a large triangular hatch on the roof over the rear fighting compartment. The two TOW launcher tubes of the Elevated TOW System (ETS) can be reloaded through this hatch. Reloading is performed by hand.

The company commander of A Company, 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment guides his men from the side of a road during a dismounted patrol in a village somewhere south of Samarra. All soldiers of his command team are armed with the 5.56mm M4A1 carbine. The weapons are fitted with different sights and aiming equipment, such as the ACOG reflex sight and the AN/PEQ-4 IR Pointer/Illuminator. The soldier is wearing the latest type of US ballistic helmet fitted with mountings for night vision goggles.



These M1126 Stryker ICVs belong to A Company, 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment. The ICV is armed with "Kongsberg" Remote Weapon Station with a universal soft-mount cradle, which can be fitted with different weapons. The first vehicle in the picture is fitted with a 40mm Mk.19 automatic grenade launcher, while the second vehicle is fitted with a 12.7mm M2 HB machine gun.

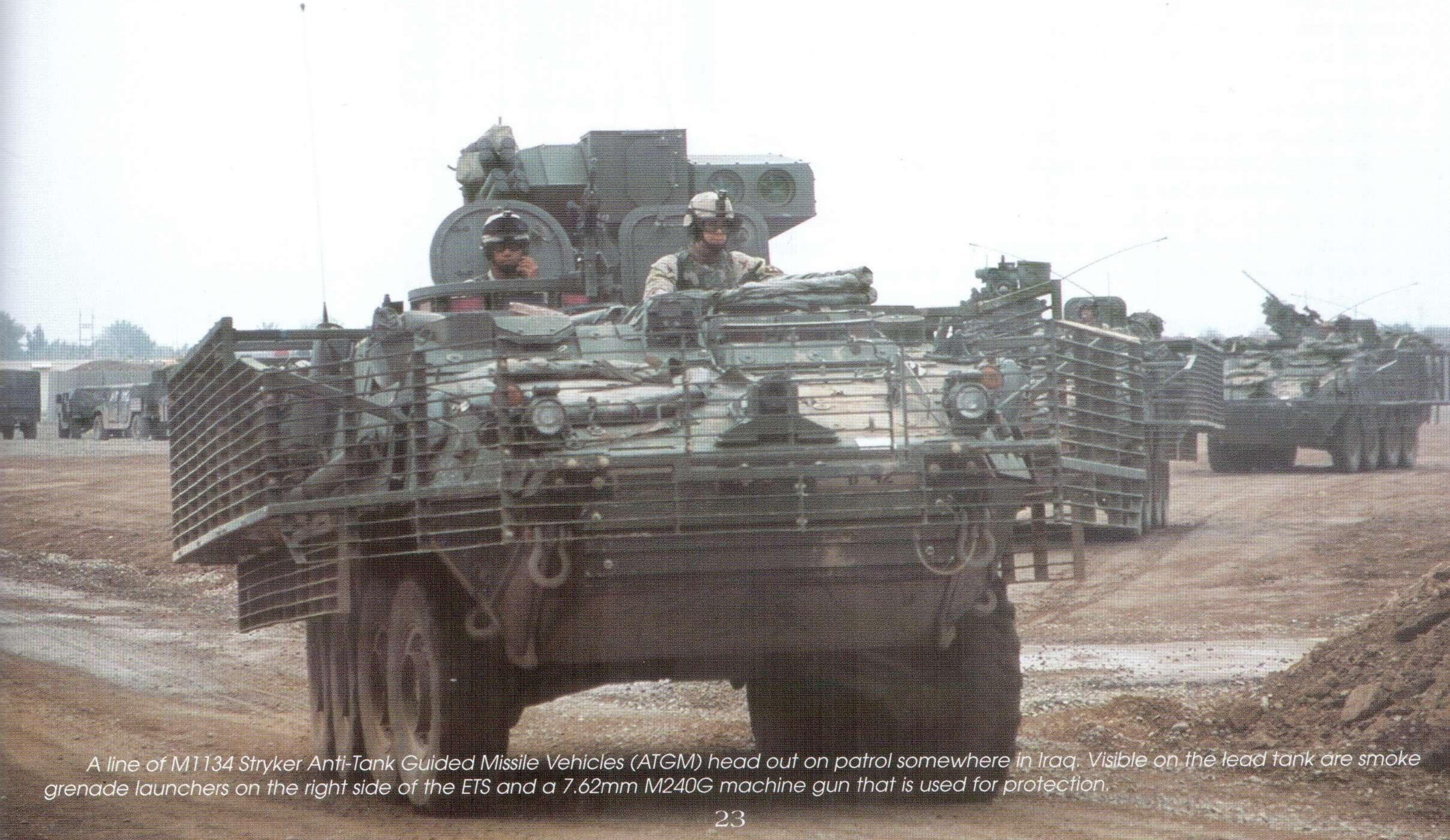
Washington, to Initial Brigade Combat Teams. The 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division was chosen to become the first unit of this kind. The decision for Fort Lewis was partly made because of the base's large training ranges and the ability to transport troops quickly to nearby McChord Air Base and the Port of Tacoma.

Immediately after the 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division was selected, the restructuring of the brigade began in May 2000. The brigade lost its armor battalions and gained additional light infantry battalions instead. In December 2001, the restructured 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division achieved its Initial Operating Capability, which certifies the unit as being capable of accomplishing brigade-level operations. This was done while the Stryker IAV was still under development. Prior to the first Stryker IAV entering service with the IBCT in June 2002, the brigade was equipped with surrogate equipment.

Introduction and Training

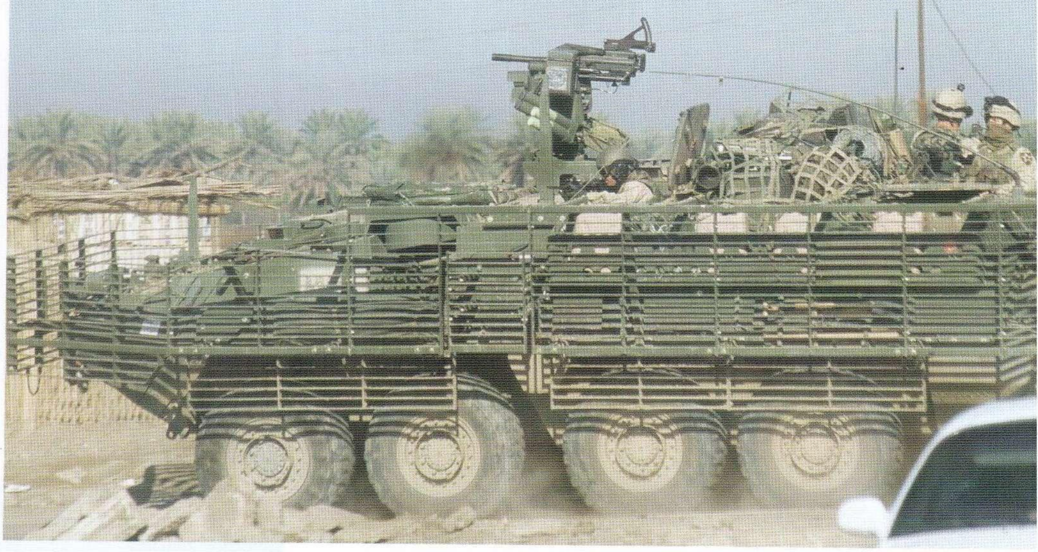
The first production vehicles of the Stryker IAV were delivered to the US Army in March 2002. In June, these vehicles were given to the 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division. During the joint force-command field experiment and demonstration exercise "Millenium Challenge 2002", the US Army deployed for the first time 14 Stryker IAVs in July and August 2002. Since then, the 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division has stayed busy becoming familiar with the new vehicle and getting itself combat ready.

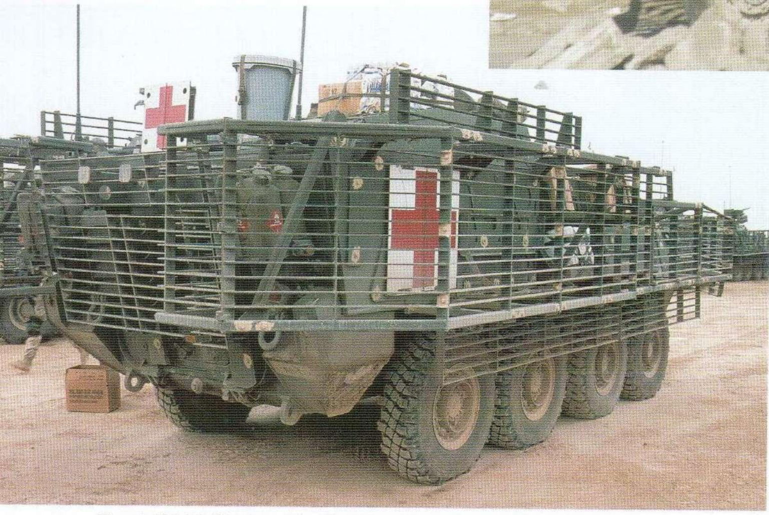
August 2003 saw the first deployment of Stryker vehicles when a platoon equipped with the new vehicles demonstrated its capabilities in South Korea. Since June 2002, the brigade's units have conducted countless training exercises and tests. This exercise series concluded with the Initial Operational Test and Evaluation (IOT&E) and the Operational Evaluation (OE) between May and September 2003. From 4 March to the 28 May 2003, as part of the IOT&E, the 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry



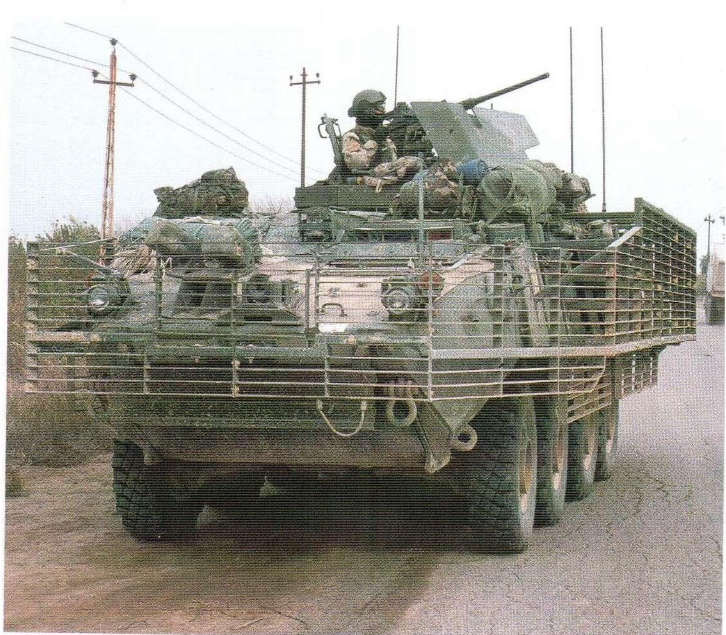
A line of M1134 Stryker Anti-Tank Guided Missile Vehicles (ATGM) head out on patrol somewhere in Iraq. Visible on the lead tank are smoke grenade launchers on the right side of the ETS and a 7.62mm M240G machine gun that is used for protection.

This M1126 Stryker ICV is armed with a Mk.19 40mm grenade launcher. Note the way that gear is stored and secured atop the vehicle.





The M1133 Stryker Medical Evacuation Vehicle (MEV) is fitted with an automatic litter-lifting system, and inside the vehicle there is enough space above the litters to allow the medics to do their work. A medical kit is stored inside the large hull of the vehicle.



The M1130 Stryker Command Vehicle (CV) is armed with a 12.7mm M2 HB machine gun and stuffed with communication and command equipment, including SINCGARS radios and the FBCB 2 (Force XXI Battle Command Brigade and Below) digital communications system. This M1130 Stryker CV belongs to A Company, 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment. Note the improvised gun shield.

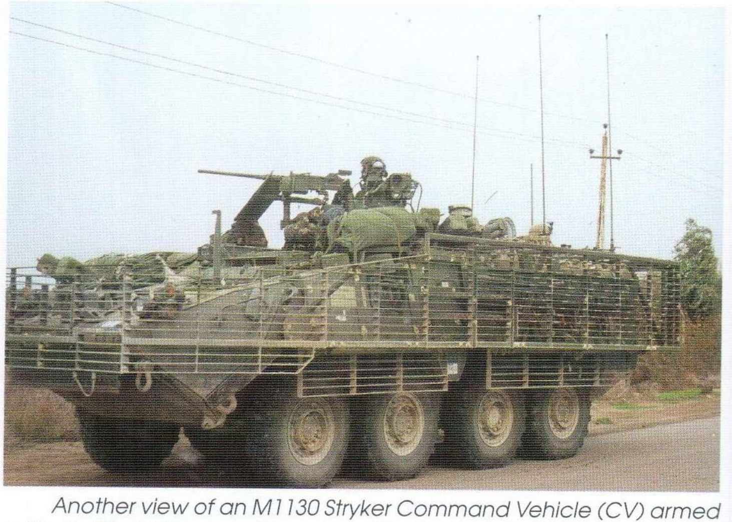
Division conducted a "deployment exercise" that tested the brigade's capability to deploy strategically and tactically by sea, air and land. The exercise was highlighted by a field training exercise at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, California, between 1 and 11 April and a field training exercise at the Joint Readiness Training Center at Folk Polk, Louisiana, between 17 and 27 May 2003. During the exercise, the brigade conducted early-entry operations and combat operations training involving the transport of 1,500 vehicles (including 293 Stryker vehicles) by air, land and sea to ports close to Fort Polk.

During the exercise, the 1st Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment conducted live-fire exercises, maneuvers on troop and squadron levels, integrated target acquisition, and live firing with field artillery and mortars. They also conducted intelligence collection and analysis, and used their FBCB2 digital equipment continuously. The 1st Battalion, 37th Field Artillery Regiment conducted battery and battalion live-fire exercises in support of the 1-14 CAV. These included the synchronization of mortars for marking fires, and aircraft delivery of ordnance through digital operations.

Operational Diary

In early October 2003, the 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division began preparations to take part in Operation "Iraqi Freedom". In early November 2003, deployment began from the unit's home base to Camp Udairi in Kuwait. On 12 November, the brigade's Stryker vehicles and other equipment, a total of 2300 pieces of cargo, arrived in the port of Kuwait aboard the USNS *Shughart* and USNS *Sisler* after a three-week voyage from Fort Lewis, Washington, via the Port of Tacoma.

The brigade's arrival was followed by a package of mission-aimed combat training conducted in the Kuwaiti desert. This involved live-firing



Another view of an M1130 Stryker Command Vehicle (CV) armed with a .50-caliber machine gun. Thanks to a large, video-display terminal, the commander is able to follow the battle in real time.

This M1126 Stryker Infantry Carrier Vehicle (ICV), which belongs to B Company, 5th Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment, was seen near the unit's base in Balad.

The powerful engine of the M1126 Stryker Infantry Carrier Vehicle (ICV) enables the 19-ton heavy vehicle to reach a top speed of 100km/h (62 mph).

The Stryker Interim Armored Vehicle (IAV) is fitted with a tire inflation system that allows the driver of the vehicle to inflate or deflate the tires from inside the vehicle to enhance the vehicle's mobility according to the type of terrain it is crossing. The vehicle also has two run-flat tires on the first and last axles on each side.

An M1126 Stryker ICV moves through an Iraqi village during c mounted patrol. The Stryker IAV is powered by a 7.2-liter Caterpilla 3126 I6 six-cylinder, turbo-charged, diesel engine that develop 350hp.

training at a nine-kilometer- (5.6-mile-) long range close to camp Udair that was built especially for anti-ambush drills. Training include close quarter live firing, firing from the inside of a moving vehicle, immediate action drills, the use of vehicles in a defensive perimeter, medica evacuation, setting up of a helicopter landing zone, convoy escort training (including counter-ambush training using live ammunition). In addition t fulfilling training missions the troops of the brigade where kept bus preparing their vehicles for the guerrilla-type war in Iraq. Along with loading ammunition, food and water into the vehicles, they added Sla armor to the brigade's 309 Strykers. The Slat armor can protect the Stryke from the deadly RPG-propelled grenades.

The first week in December saw the brigade crossing the border from Kuwait into Iraq and heading up into the area of responsibility (AOR) o the 4th (US) Infantry Division. This deployment was accomplished i several convoys involving all of the brigade's support vehicles that were escorted by Stryker vehicles. In the 4th Infantry Division's AOR, the unit of the 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division were based in several camps i the Samarra region. After their arrival, the troops of the IBCT began t familiarize themselves with the region by establishing countless vehicle checkpoints and conducting foot and mounted patrols and house searches

First Losses

Early in the morning of 8 December, only days after their arrival i Iraq, three soldiers from the 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division died in a tragic accident. During a patrol, their two Stryker IAVs plunged over collapsed embankment and landed upside down in a canal northwest of the Iraqi town of Duluiyah. The accident was the first fatality involving Stryker IAV since it entered service with the US Army, and it also marked the first death within the brigade since its deployment to Iraq.

While the recovery of the two Stryker IAVs was still underway, the troops of the involved unit carried on to conduct their mission, which wa to conduct traffic checkpoints and other routine operations in the area. I another incident on 13 December, a Stryker RV was destroyed when it hi an improvised explosive device (IED) buried next to the road. The vehicl belonged to the 1st Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment. Except for th driver, who suffered a broken right ankle and foot, none of the vehicle' four-man crew was injured.

Operation "Ivy Blizzard"

Between 17 and 30 December 2003, troops of 3rd Brigade, 2n Infantry Division took part in Operation "Ivy Blizzard". The aim of th operation was to destroy resistance forces hiding in the Tigris River Valle city and using the town as an operational base. Samarra has been the scen of frequent attacks on US forces and Iraqis working to set up a new government in the country. On 15 December, insurgents ambushed a IBCT patrol. In the following firefight, 11 attackers were killed. It was th first sustained fighting for the soldiers of the "Arrowhead" Brigade.

Troops make use of the rear hatch of the Stryker IAV to load and unload materials. Although it is used as an armored troop transport vehicle, depending on its variant the Stryker can serve as a combat system employing various weapons, a reconnaissance vehicle, an ambulance, a command vehicle, or an engineer vehicle.

The TOW missile fired from the Elevated TOW System (ETS) can destroy any currently known armor up to a distance of 3750 meters (4100 yards). A "Bunker Buster" warhead will be available for the IBCTs in the near future.

Prior to their deployment to Iraq, every soldier in the new IBCT received two sets of Advanced Combat Uniforms, each of which cost $100. The new desert-pattern uniform features built-in knee and elbow pads, and a new collar with Velcro seals to protect the throat and chest. In addition, the button-up blouse front has been replaced with a two-way zipper and Velcro. Besides the new uniform, the troops also received a new Advanced Combat Helmet that weighs between 1.4kg and 1.5kg (3 and 3.3 lb.), depending on the size. This soldier of the 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment is armed with a 5.56mm M249 Squad Assault Weapon. Note the plastic handcuffs that are ready for use and the knee-protection kit.

Samarra is about 97km (60 miles) north of Baghdad in the so-called "Sunni Triangle", an area inhabited by Sunni Muslims where anti-American sentiment runs high. In the past, Samarra has seen many clashes between US troops and Iraqis. In a raid on 8 December, US troops seized $2 million. On 30 November, the city was the scene of the largest clash since the end of major combat operations. During the fighting, US troops killed about 50 insurgents who had staged a series of coordinated ambushes on coalition trucks delivering the new Iraqi currency to the local banks. On 20 November, US troops killed eight insurgents who attacked a convoy. Samarra is also the place where US forces detained the family of Izzat Ibrahim al-Douri in a raid on 26 November. Al-Douri is thought to be a leading organizer of Iraqi guerrilla attacks.

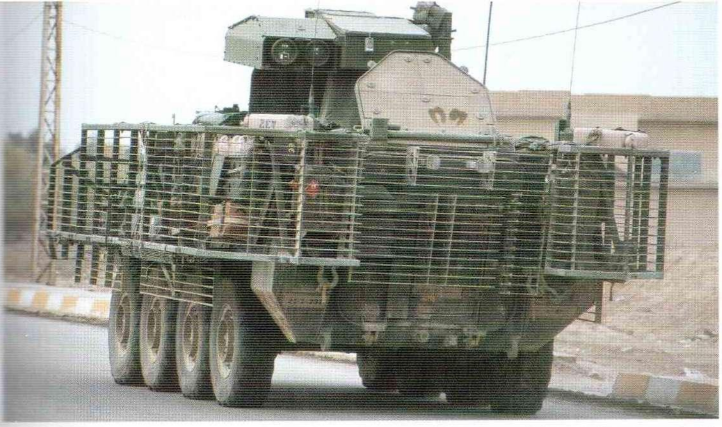
Before the raids began on 17 December, scouts from the IBCT's 1st Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment put the city under surveillance for several days. Operation "Ivy Blizzard" was the first major operation in which the brigade was involved. In a series of raids beginning about 2:00 o'clock in the morning, 2000 soldiers from two Stryker infantry battalions swept into the 250,000-resident city in search of several men thought to be organizing the Iraqi insurgency. During the first day, 12 suspects were arrested and one Iraqi was wounded when he approached a Stryker IAV formation with his car. The soldiers spent the following days in their vehicles on the outskirts of the village. They used the daytime to gather information from the locals and searched suspected hideouts at night. During the operation, the IBCT was responsible for half of the city, while another brigade of the 4th Infantry Division searched the rest of Samarra.

After 13 days of operations in Samarra, seven high-value targets were captured, and 50 other members of the resistance taken prisoner. Some 15 enemy fighters were killed when resisting US troops. Soldiers confiscated two surface-to air-missiles, 305 60mm mortar rounds, five 82mm mortar tubes (with 208 rounds), one 120mm mortar tube (with 10 rounds), 200 155mm artillery shells, 228 AK-47 assault rifles, 53 RPG-7s (with 143 rounds), 198 HE rocket warheads, and countless building materials for IEDs from 26 weapons caches.

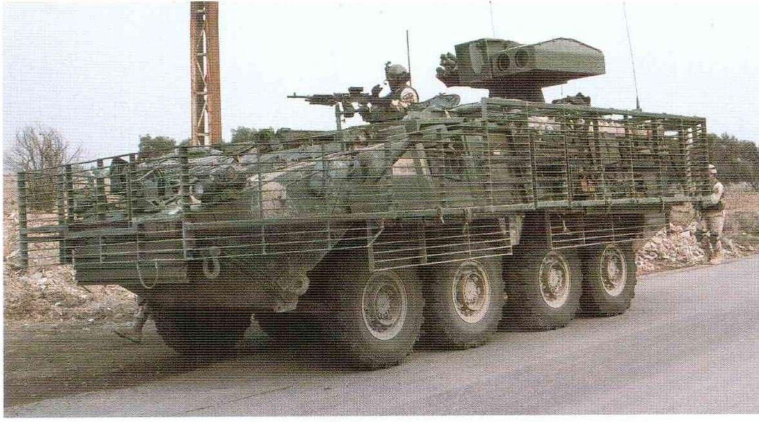
Deployment to a New AOR

At Christmas time, Camp "Eagle", where the IBCT's HQ is located, came under mortar attack over three consecutive days. On the third day, target acquisition radar detected the enemy position, and the 155mm M198 towed howitzers of the 1st Battalion, 37th Field Artillery Regiment returned fire with air-burst rounds. When a Stryker IAV patrol reached the enemy position, only the enemy's equipment was found, but none of the attackers. In late January, the 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division moved north from the AOR of the 4th Infantry Division and took over responsibility of AORs previously controlled by the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault).

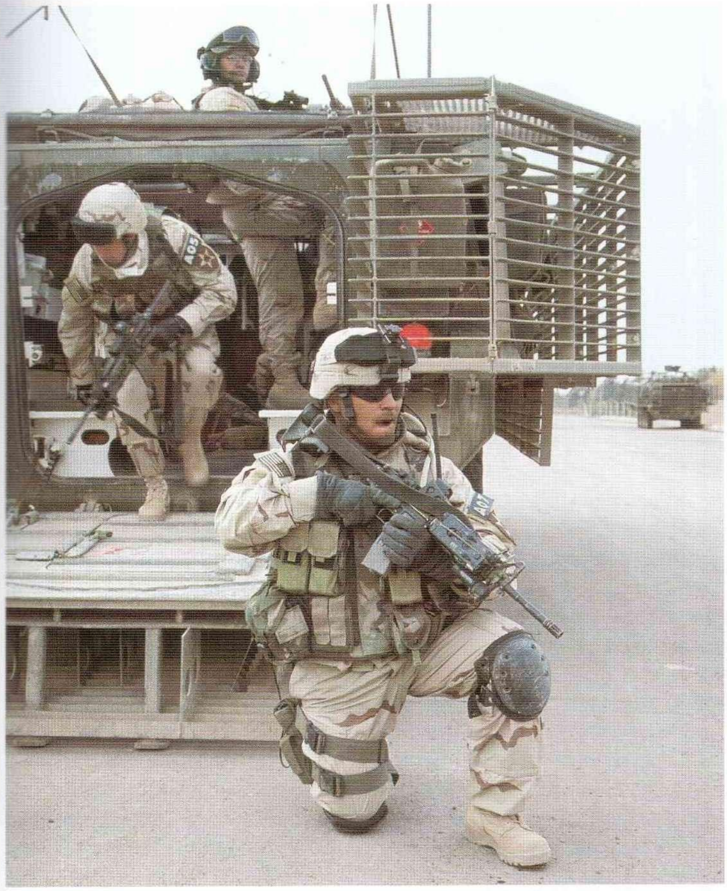
The 17th of January witnessed the official hand over of authority from the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) to troops of the 1st Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment in the Tallafar region located north of Mosul. On 22 January, the 5th Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment took over the Tigris River Valley AOR from the 1st Battalion, 327th Infantry Regiment. With the deployment into the AOR North, the troops of the 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, who had been operating in the "Sunni Triangle", would now see action in another hot zone in Iraq.



Like all other variants of the Stryker IAV, the M1134 Stryker Anti-Tank Guided Missile Vehicles deployed to Iraq are fitted with the Slad armor in order to protect the vehicles against the deadly effect of the RPG warheads used by Iraqi resistance forces.



An M1134 Stryker Anti-Tank Guided Missile Vehicle (ATGM) on patrol. The vehicle's Elevated TOW System (ETS) can be elevated 0.5 meters over the vehicle chassis, and its head is fitted with two TOW launcher tubes.

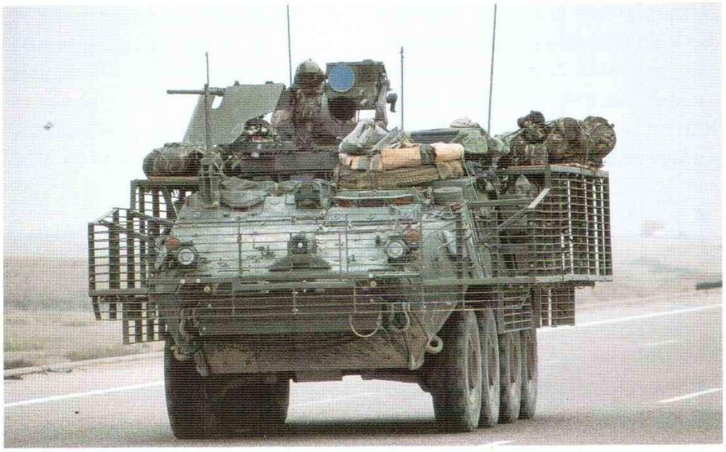


A trooper from A Company, 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment covers his comrades while they dismount from an M1126 Stryker Infantry Carrier Vehicle (ICV). The troops are armed with the 5.56mm M4A1 carbine, which has replaced the 5.56mm M16A3 assault rifle as the standard weapon in the new IBCTs.

Technical Data for the Stryker Interim Armored Vehicle

(Related to Infantry Carrier Vehicle)

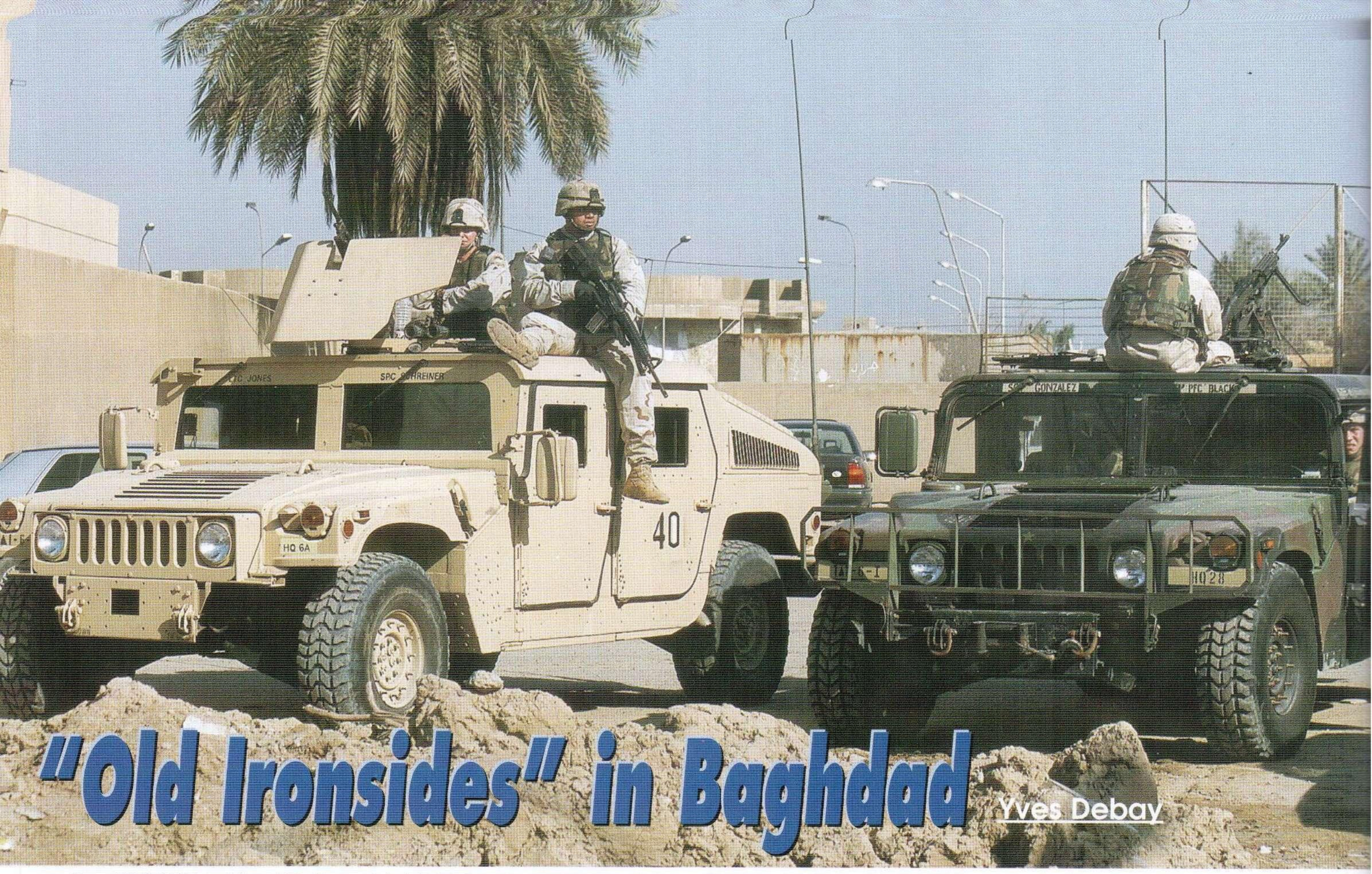
Crew:	Driver, commander and nine infantrymen
Combat weight:	19 tons
Length:	275 inches
Width:	107 inches
Height:	104 inches
Maximum road speed:	62mph
Maximum road range:	330 miles
Trench crossing:	78 inches
Forward slope:	60%
Ground clearance:	24 inches
Side slope:	30%
Step climbing:	23 inches
Engine:	7.2-liter Caterpillar 3126 I6 six-cylinder, turbo-charged, diesel engine developing 350hp
Transmission:	Allison MD3560P automatic transmission with six forward gears and one reverse gear
Brakes:	Power brakes with ABS on rear three axles
Armament:	40mm Mk 19 automatic grenade launchers or a 12.7mm M2 HB machine gun in a Kongsberg Remote Weapon Station; 4x 66mm M6 smoke grenade launchers with four barrels each
Ammunition:	430 rounds of 40mm or 2000 rounds 12.7mm ammunition; 32 66mm smoke grenades
Armor protection level:	All around against 14.5mm ammunition and overhead against 155mm HE airburst.
Equipment:	Hydraulic self-recovery winch, Fire Suppression System (FM 200 and FE 25), NBC protection system, AN/PSN-11 PLGR (Precision Lightweight GPS Receiver), SINCGARS radios, Squad Leader Video Display Terminal and FBCB 2.
Manufacturer:	GM GDLS, a joint venture between General Motors, Electro-Motive Division and General Dynamics Land Systems Division



The M1127 Stryker Reconnaissance Vehicle (RV) has a crew of six soldiers and can carry one additional soldier. The vehicle is equipped with reconnaissance and surveillance equipment, and its crew can also gather information during dismounted operations. This vehicle was seen during the deployment of the 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division to Iraq in early December 2003.

"Old Ironsides" in Baghdad

Yves Debay



Two HMMWVs of the HQ Coy of 1-6 Infantry are seen near Aqaba Square. Note the two different kinds of camouflage. The majority of patrols made in the center of Baghdad consist of HMMWVs.

The US infantrymen slowly move down the Sadun Fatih road. It is Wednesday, 10 December 2003. We are in the city Baghdad, the capital of Iraq, which is the area of responsibility (AOR) of the 1st Armored Division. The soldiers carefully check some bushes in a park, then they move on to a pile of dustbins to see if something suspicious is hidden inside. A dog handler with a search dog from the Military Police is supporting the infantrymen in their search for hidden explosives.

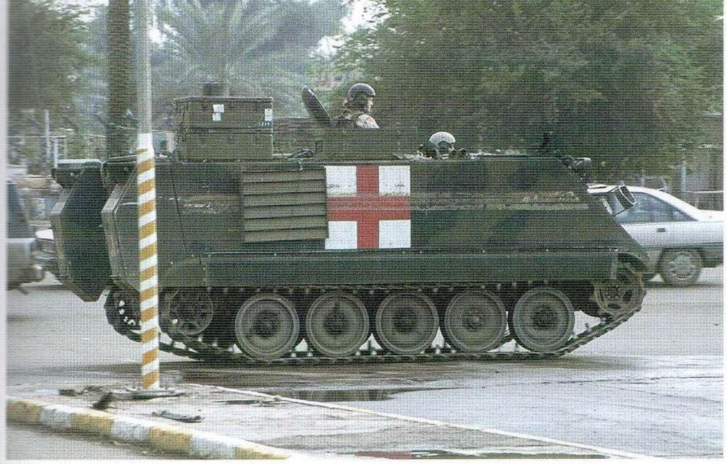
Should you visit Baghdad, the small number of US armored vehicles on the road will surprise you. You will see relatively few Bradley and Abrams in the center of town, with the exception of several armored vehicles at static checkpoints that guard checkpoints near the important access to the former compound of Saddam Hussein, the Hotel al-Rashid, or the Palestine Hotel. They are located in the so-called "Green Zone" that is under American control.

The infantrymen belong to the 1st Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment of the 1st Armored Division. Today their task is to provide security for a massive demonstration of various political and religious groups. The protest is directed against the terror of the Iraqi resistance. This means an early start for the soldiers, and at first light they began to check the planned route of the demonstration for improvised explosive devices (IEDs). Comrades from other units of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team will join them once this task is done. The troops, together with local Iraqi policemen, will establish a security perimeter around the area in which the demonstration is to be conducted. From the air the crews of hovering Kiowa Warrior OH-58D(I) helicopters from the 1st Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment carefully monitor the scenery and the groups of protesters that are already arriving. In the meantime, the first M2A2 ODS Bradleys appear in the area, but they keep a low profile. These armored infantry vehicles are there just as backup in case the peaceful demonstration turns into a riot or is attacked by people supporting the old regime.

Division History

The 1st (US) Armored Division, nicknamed "Old Ironsides," is the oldest armored division in the US Army, having been activated on 15 July 1940. In November 1942, during Operation "Torch," the allied invasion of Northwest Africa, the 1st Division was the first US armored division to see combat. Up until the Allied victory in Africa, the division fought against Rommel's Afrika Korps, during which time the unit saw action at Kasserine Pass. Following the victory in Africa, the 1st Armored Division saw action in the Italian campaign where it took part in the Salerno landing on 9 September 1943.

In January 1944, the 1st Armored Division took part in the Anzio Beach landing and led the breakout from the beachhead. On 4 June 1944, troops of the division liberated Rome. In May 1945, at the end of World War II, the division fought in northern Italy in the Po Valley. After eleven months as occupation force in Germany, the division was re-deployed to the states in April 1946. Deactivation followed shortly afterward.



An ambulance version of the M113 at an intersection in central Baghdad. It is rare to see an isolated vehicle since they usually travel in pairs for safety reasons.

On 7 March 1951, "Old Ironsides" was reactivated in Fort Hood, Texas, as part of the Korean War build up. In the following years the division remained the only combat-ready armored division in the United States, became the first division to integrate black soldiers throughout its ranks, and was the first division to be equipped with the M48 "Patton" tank. In 1956, the division moved to Fort Polk, Louisiana. In the 1962 Cuban crisis, the division played a major role while being used as a deterrence force. Even though the division did not see action in Vietnam, a number of its units saw combat in the war against communism. These units were mainly A Company, 501st Aviation Battalion; 1st Squadron, 1st Calvary Regiment; 1st Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment; and 1st Battalion, 52nd Infantry Regiment. In May 1971, the 1st Armored Division moved to Germany and replaced the 4th Armored Division.

In November 1990, now equipped with M1A1 Abrams MBTs and M2A2 Bradley IFVs, the division was alerted and moved to the Middle East under Operation "Desert Shield," the response to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. In less than two months the division moved 17,400 soldiers and 7,050 pieces of equipment by rail, sea, and air to Saudi Arabia. The 24th of February 1991 saw the 1st Armored Division crossing the Iraqi border and leading VII Corp's main flanking attack. In the fighting that took place during the 89-hour-long Operation "Desert Storm," the division travelled 250 kilometers (155 miles), faced the elite Republican Guard Divisions, destroyed 768 tanks, APCs and artillery pieces, and captured 1,064 prisoners of war.

Between December 1995 and November 1996, the 1st Armored Division operated in Bosnia with IFOR under Operation "Joint Endeavor." Called Task Force "Eagle," the division, with troops of 12 other nations under its command, accomplished much. They enforced the cease-fire, supervised the marking of boundaries and the zone of separation between the former warring factions, enforced the withdrawal of the combatants, and oversaw the movement of the heavy weapons to designated storage sites. The next operation in the Balkans for "Old Ironsides" followed in Kosovo in 1999. In April of that year, troops of the 1st Armored Division deployed to Albania under Operation "Allied Force," with the mission of deterring the Serbs from conducting more ethnic cleansing. In June the division was among other NATO units that moved into Kosovo under Operation "Joint Guardian" in order to bring peace back to the civil war-shaken Yugoslav province. Up to the beginning of the Iraq conflict, the division was present in Kosovo maintaining the US-led Multinational Brigade East.

Deployment to Iraq

On 4 March 2003, the 1st Armored Division received orders to deploy in the US CENTCOM area of responsibility. The division was dedicated to take part in the invasion of Iraq as a follow-on force. However, the refusal of Turkey to permit US forces to attack Iraq from its territory resulted in a delay in the deployment of the division. It took another two months until the division finally deployed to Iraq in May 2003.

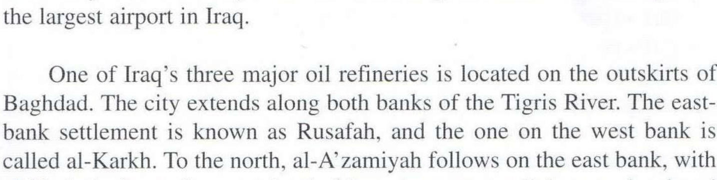
With the restoration of democracy following Hussein's dictatorship, the Iraqi people will receive the right to form political parties and freely gather to demonstrate. On 10 December 2003, several political groups from social democrats to communists held a demonstration in Baghdad. The 1-6 Infantry had HMMWVs on hand to monitor the event.

The 3rd Brigade took part in the war, fighting fiercely near Karbala when the brigade crossed over the Euphrates and entered Baghdad (see Special Ops No. 27). The other brigades, Div Arty and other troops arrived later in the spring to begin their mission of restoring peace and stability to the capital and its suburbs. Even though the Iraqi capital does not have the infamous reputation of Fallujah or Baquba, Baghdad is still a plenty dangerous "hot spot." For the 17,000 troops of the "Old Ironsides," the mission would not be easy but it could be easily described in one sentence: Establish a safe and secure environment for the Iraqi people.

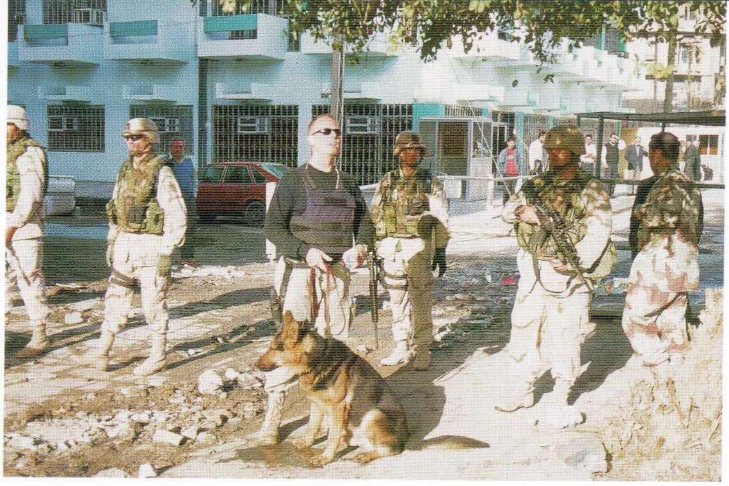
Baghdad: AOR of the 1st Armored Division

The area of responsibility of the 1st Armored Division is Baghdad, the capital city of Iraq, which has a population of over five million inhabitants. Of these, some 70% are Shi'ite, while the bulk of the remainder are Sunni. Baghdad is the center of the Iraqi railway system, all of the important motorways in the country meet there, and Baghdad International Airport is the largest airport in Iraq.

One of Iraq's three major oil refineries is located on the outskirts of Baghdad. The city extends along both banks of the Tigris River. The east-bank settlement is known as Rusafah, and the one on the west bank is called al-Karkh. To the north, al-A'zamiyah follows on the east bank, with al-Kazimiyah on the west bank. Many important religious and cultural



One goal of the political demonstration in December was to ask the Americans to restore security in the nation. One way they complied was for the 1-6 Infantry to provide troops and HMMWVs to ensure that the demonstration was peaceful and safe.



On the morning of 10 December, a few hours before the demonstration, the MPs of the 1-6 Infantry patrol with a trained dog on Aqaba Square in front of the former Air Force Ministry to search for bombs that may have been placed along the route of the demonstration. In Muslim countries, the troops must use dogs carefully and not use them to search houses since the Muslim religion considers them to be impure animals.

sites are situated in Baghdad, including the shrines of great Imams such as Sheik al-Ghailani and Imam al-A'dham. Eleven bridges connect the two halves of the city.

Endless Patrolling

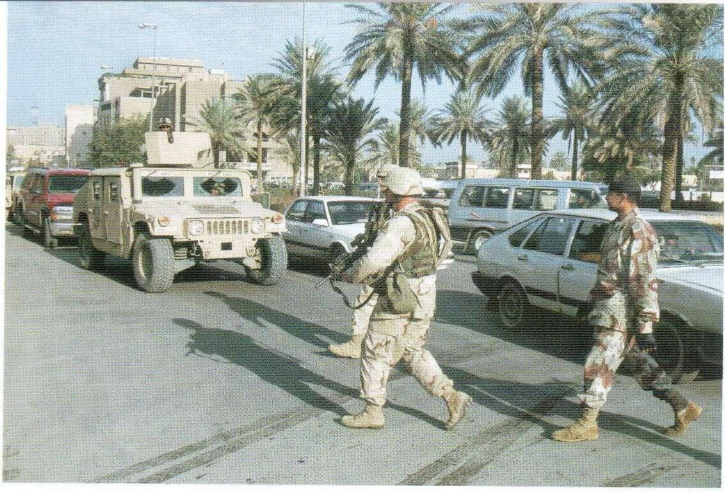
Establishing law and order in a large city like Baghdad is a monstrous task, taking into account that the city's five million people had been living almost without any law maintaining organization. In addition, most people were unemployed and tried to make their living by whatever activity would pay . . . for example, by smuggling. Looting and robbery were common in the streets of Baghdad. The supply of water and other humanitarian goods was insufficient. Soon after the "Old Ironsides" arrived in the city, they began to patrol the streets, to conduct countless vehicle checkpoints and searches, to guard market places and to put armored vehicles in front of every building in a professional manner. In June, every one of the 750 soldiers of the 2nd Battalion, 70th Armor Regiment, a tank unit, saw himself serving on patrol regardless of whether he belonged to a tank crew or was a cook. During their patrols the soldiers of the 1st Armored Division not only faced former fighters of the Fedayeen Saddam, which still resisted US troops in the city and conducted ambushes, but also faced armed robbers and other criminals.

In the following month, with employment rising and the living conditions improving, the number of crimes dropped. In addition, the newly formed police units in Baghdad added their efforts to make the streets safer. By the end of 2003, some districts in the city were already under full control of the Iraqi police and the ICDC. However, the activities of resistance forces increased on a daily basis up to the end of Ramadan at the end of November 2003. Since then, the number of attacks has dropped but the suicide-bomb attacks, ambushes, and rocket attacks became more effective and deadly. Also, the targets changed. In the past, US troops were the major targets, but slowly Iraqi policeman and civilians supporting the US troops were increasingly targeted.

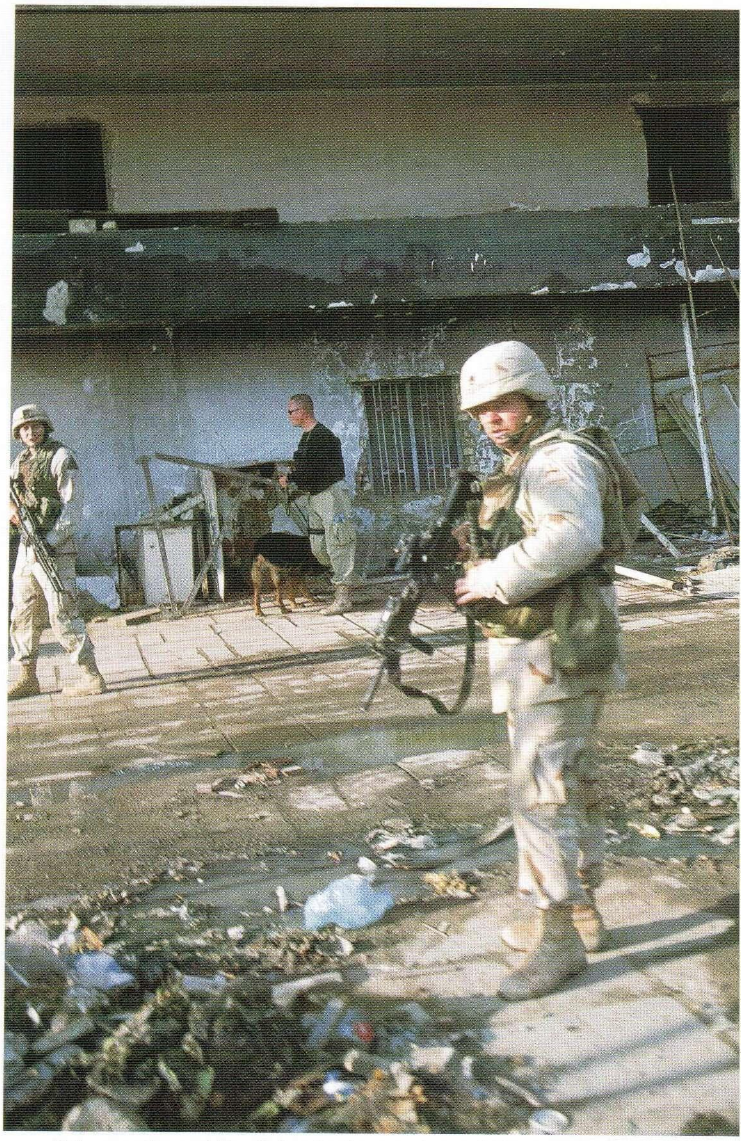
Hearts and Minds

Civil Affairs units of the 1st Armored Division began a number of "hearts and minds" operations. For example, troops reconstructed market places, and hospitals were supported with medical stuff, while ambulance vehicles were handed over to medical services. The "Old Ironsides" supported the Baghdad fire brigade, and engineers of the division worked on the water and power supply, and repaired bridges over the Tigris River. Further, troops supplied equipment to schools and helped the Iraqis to get things back to normal.

But due to a number of problems, these missions were only partly effective. Often Iraqis lost their trust in the US forces when they saw the queues (lines) in front of petrol stations, something that never happened during Saddam's time, and which is hard to understand considering Iraq is the third largest oil producing country in the world. Another problem was the traffic situation. Suddenly there were 1.2 million more cars on the streets of Baghdad than before the war, which, by itself, should be enough to stop traffic. In addition, US forces closed some vital roads in the city when they formed the well-protected "Green Zone."



The soldiers of the 1st Armored Division wear the regular US desert camouflage battle dress uniform (BDU).



This member of the 1-6 Infantry carries out his duty in Baghdad in a professional manner, honoring the unit that is identified by the subdued version of the famous "Old Ironsides" triangular shoulder patch.

Another piece of the uniform worn by the 1st Armored Division is the new lightweight Interceptor, which both these soldiers wear.

Operation "Iron Grip"

In late 2003, units of the 1st Armored Division mounted operation "Iron Grip," only one of countless operations conducted by the "Old Ironsides" to destroy Iraqi resistance forces in Baghdad. The primary targets of the operation were former regime cell structures. Intelligence gathered after the capture of Saddam told the division that 14 cells operate in the city, linked by a financial and planning network.

A good study of military police from the 1-6 Infantry positioned near a HMMWV in the center of Baghdad. Some of the classic weapons they carry include the M203 grenade launcher and a M240 machine gun on top of the HMMWV.

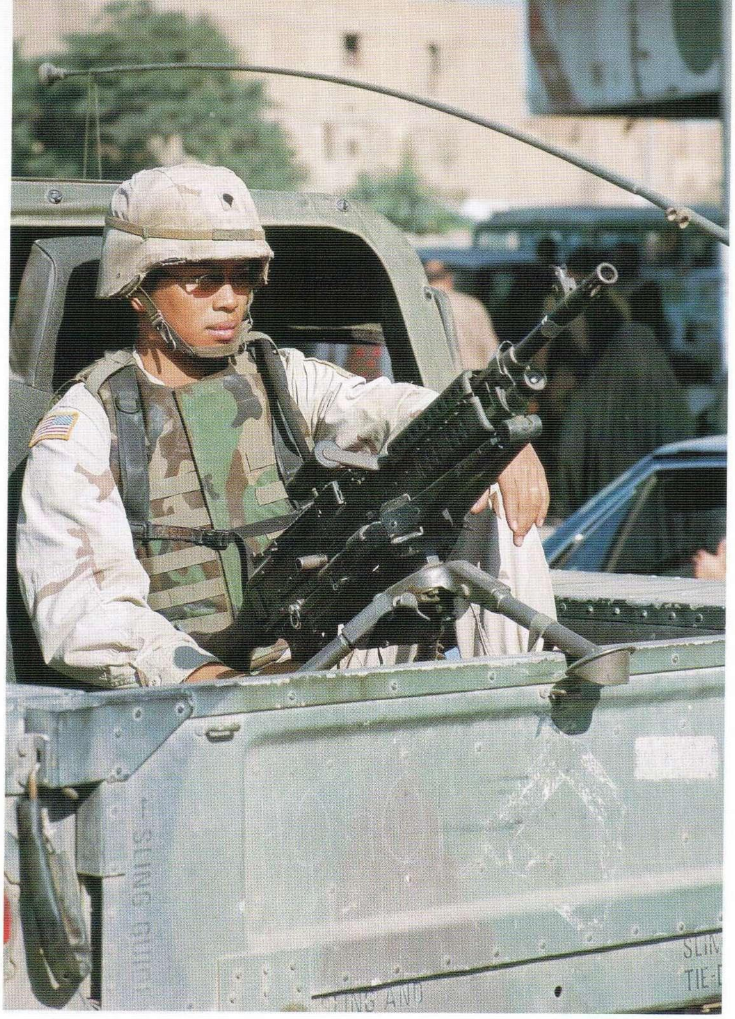
A young Iraqi local takes a long look at a soldier from the 1-6 Infantry who, armed with an M4 carbine, is taking part in the patrol to secure the route of the demonstration.

Operation "Iron Grip" was aimed at disrupting and ultimately destroying the cells and the network. In a massive search operation, which also involved raids on certain locations, troops of the division captured 185 of the enemy. Along with these people, countless material for the construction of IEDs was found. Roadside bombs and IEDs are the weapons of choice for the anti-coalition forces, and the weapons have taken a horrible death toll among coalition soldiers. Under Operation "Iron Grip," the division managed to destroy plans that the resistance forces had to launch a massive series of bomb attacks over Christmas 2003.

Artillery Fire in Baghdad's Operation "Iron Hammer"

After an average of 35 attacks daily on US troops and several hundred US soldiers being killed since the official ending of the fighting in Iraq on 1 May 2003, US troops launched Operation "Iron Hammer" in Baghdad in order to pay back the killers. The 19th of November 2003 saw US troops of the 1st Armored Division swarming out of Baghdad. Equipped with M1A1 Abrams main battle tanks, M2A2 ODS Bradleys and other heavy fighting vehicles, the troops launched a blow against the Iraqi resistance forces.

During the operation, 400 soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 36th Infantry Regiment, together with the ICDC, cordoned off a residential area whose inhabitants were known for being loyal to Saddam Hussein. The point of the operation was to deter active resistance common to the area and disrupt enemy activity throughout the AOR. Covered by OH-58D(I) reconnaissance helicopters of the 1st Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment, the infantry soldiers conducted a methodical search of the area, taking some eight hours. As a result, Task Force 1-36 soldiers detained 21 Iraqis for crimes against Iraqi people and the Coalition forces. Large numbers of assault rifles, IED material, grenades, and a huge quantity of ammunition were confiscated.



In an urban environment, danger can come from anywhere . . . so it is important to keep an eye out to the rear. The machine gunner in the back of this HMMWV performs that protective task.

But Task Force 1-36 was only one unit involved in Operation "Iron Hammer," which involved more than 2000 troops. Elsewhere in the city troops of the 1st Armored Division fired artillery and mortar shells on three targets in Baghdad, one of which was a clothes-dyeing factory. The US forces suspected that all of these sites had been used to launch rockets and mortars at Coalition compounds. In a separate attack, an AC-130U "Spooky" gunship used 105mm cannons and machine guns to destroy a former Republican Guard building in Baghdad's al Farat neighborhood. In another strike, 155mm M109A6 Paladin self-propelled howitzers of the Division Artillery, 1st Armored Division fired shells at a "terrorist mortar team" that had lobbed several rounds in the direction of the Green Zone.

Cordon-and-Search Operation with the "Bandits"

On 19 October 2003, the 1st Battalion, 37th Armor Regiment "Bandits" of the 1st Brigade Combat Team conducted a large cordon-and-search operation in a rural community northwest of Baghdad. The reason for the operation were recent mortar, improvised explosive device (IED) and rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) attacks in the area just east of 1-37's forward operating base. During the operation, Iraqi policemen supported TF 1-37.

In a cordon-and-search operation, an area is sealed off by the troops so that nobody can escape the area. Then the troops surrounded suspicious buildings, knock at the door and tell the owner that they are going to search his house. This is much friendlier then kicking in the door, storming inside and searching the place, but the cordon-and-search tactic has the same effect and is not upsetting to the people. If something is in the house that should not be there, it will be found, but by asking permission it is easier to make friends. Before the house is searched the people are asked to leave the house, thus nobody is offended, taking in account the touchy rules of Islam regarding a man searching a woman's quarters. Even though the houses are empty when the soldiers start to search, they must be very cautions as somebody armed with a weapon could be hiding.

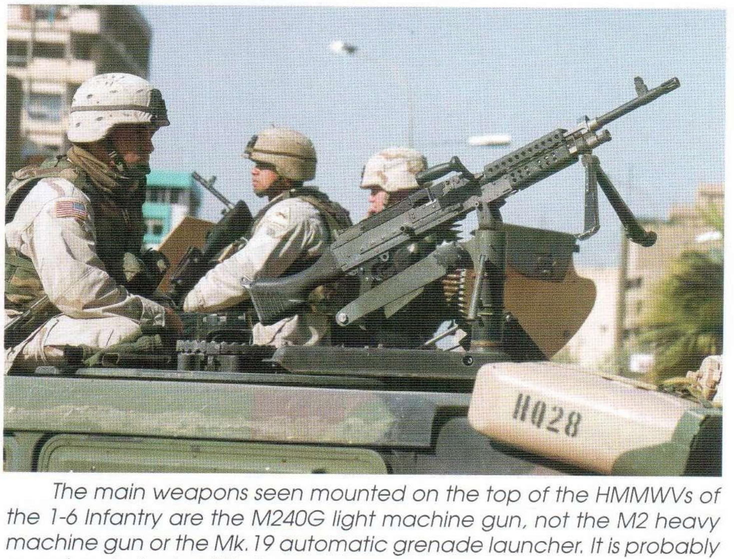
The MPs of the 1-6 Infantry have also positioned a machine gunner in the back of this vehicle prior to conducting a patrol.

The troops started early in the morning by preparing their vehicles for the operation. Prior to the search, troops communicate with the locals, which often results in the gathering of vital information. Then come the communication checks and final orders. Finally, the force leaves the base at first light, headed by units of the military police, which are tasked with blocking vital crossroads to enable the task force to quickly reach its area of operations. The moment the M1A1 Abrams and M2A2 ODS reach the operational area, they are supported in the air by OH-58D(I) helicopters, which check the area for some type of ambush or other hidden surprises.

Once a security perimeter is set by the troops, they begin their searches. In the case of the19th of October, the troops were kept busy four hours searching dozens of buildings, room by room. Based on intelligence of possible IEDs being manufactured in the area, soldiers spent a good part of their time going through blankets, boxes, stoves, and small sewage holes looking for evidence of IEDs or their manufacture. While this day brought only a RPG-7 launcher and several grenades, which were found in an open field, search-and-cordon operations have been very effective in the past.

"Green Zone"

One of the major tasks for the 1st Armored Division is to provide security for the "Green Zone." Situated in the center of Baghdad, the Green Zone is an area of closed streets that includes in its boundaries the main palaces of the former President Saddam Hussein, which today house US-occupation authorities. Living quarters and offices for the members of the civilian ruling authority and major US consulting companies are



The main weapons seen mounted on the top of the HMMWVs of the 1-6 Infantry are the M240G light machine gun, not the M2 heavy machine gun or the Mk.19 automatic grenade launcher. It is probably a gesture to look a little less provocative.

A soldier assumes close protection of the HMMWV of the HQ Company of 1-6 Infantry. The soldiers may look relaxed, but they know they could come under fire at any moment.

located in the area. Also inside the Green Zone is the headquarters of Paul Bremer. An additional blast-proof concrete wall protects the complex. The Green Zone is almost self-sufficient, and it even has its own hospital. The staff working in the Green Zone is escorted by armored vehicles of the 1st Infantry Division when travelling outside. Also inside the "Green Zone" is the Iraqi Ministry of Justice.

The Green Zone is protected by means of a concrete wall, razor wire, chain link fences, earthen berms, and a series of well-guarded checkpoints. If somebody has permission to enter the Green Zone at these checkpoints, he is body searched at least three times by a mix of soldiers of the 1st Armored Division and members of local security forces. Metal detectors are used during the search, so electrical equipment has to be switched on for a check.

Around the outer perimeter of the Green Zone, troops of the 2nd Brigade, 1st Armored Divisions have taken position. From fortified emplacements the crews of M1A1 Abrams MBTs and M2A2 IFVs carefully monitor the activities on the streets of Baghdad, ready at any time to use their vehicles' 120mm or 25mm guns to blast attackers. At random, patrols consisting of Up-armored HMMWVs can be seen circling in the areas located close to the Green Zone. Manned by four or five soldiers, the vehicles are usually armed with crew-served weapons such as the .50-caliber M2HB machine gun or the 40mm Mk.19 automatic grenade launcher. From time to time these patrols stop at crossroads, and their troops dismount and patrol the next part of the street on foot. In this case, the troops, which are armed with 5.56mm M4A1s and 5.56mm M16A3s, are closely followed by the HMMWVs, which can provide fire support in case of an ambush.

Also situated in the Green Zone is the Al-Rashid Hotel. On 27 September 2003 at 0630 hours, the hotel, in which US troops and civilians are quartered, was attacked despite impressive security measures having been taken. Three rockets were fired on the building, with one hitting its target and making minor damage. Nobody was hurt in this attack, but another attack took its toll. On 26 October, a multiple rocket launcher mounted on a cart drawn by a donkey was fired in the direction of the hotel. This time a US lieutenant colonel was killed and 18 people were wounded. During the time of the handover of the 1st Armored Division to the 1st Cavalry Division, another major attack took place in the Green Zone. On 18 January 2004, a suicide-bomb attack targeted the HQ of the CPA. It did not reach its target and no US troops were injured, but over 100 Iraqis were injured and at least 18 were killed.

Scattered all over Baghdad

The troops of the 1st Armored Division are stationed in over 35 bases all over the city area of Baghdad. Usually battalion-size forward operation bases, the camps are mainly placed in former Iraq military and governmental establishments. This includes former barracks, palaces, and prisons. But the "Old Ironsides" also makes use of some civilian locations such as the city's amusement park or a sports stadium. The US troops have turned these camps into small fortresses that are well guarded by armoured vehicles. From here the soldiers conduct their patrols within the battalion AORs. During the deployment to Iraq, the troops of the Division Engineers were heavily involved in building new bases which, according to the plan, are to be used for at least another ten years. All of these camps are located outside Baghdad in order to make their defense and protection easier. The new camps will cost the US Army some 800 million US dollars.

The US military likes to maintain a low profile during a "democratic" demonstration, so only one Bradley vehicle was deployed in case problems arose.

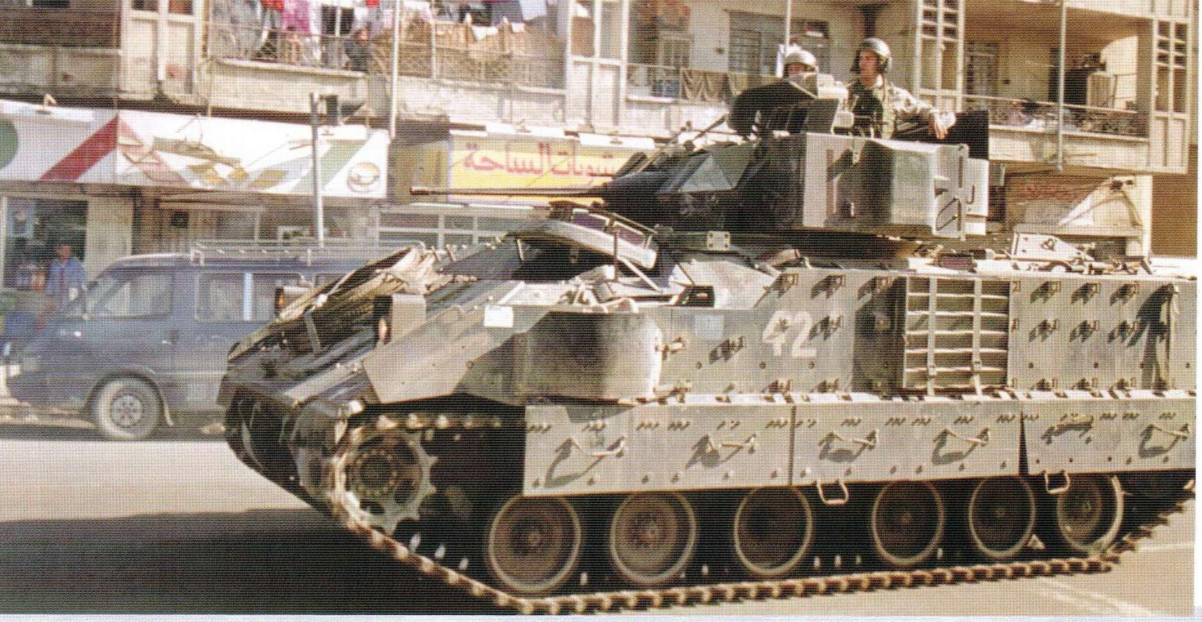
The largest of the new camps, Camp Victory North, lies northeast of Baghdad International Airport. Though Camp Victory North is the division's largest project, work continues on several other camps. About 5,000 troops will live in Taji, a former Iraqi base north of the city. In the east, camps Dragoon and War Eagle will have combined room for about 2,200 soldiers. Camp Muleskinner is to be located at Al-Rastimiya, the former Iraqi officer's war college. About 2,100 US troops will share this new base with the new Iraqi army. Camp Falcon, a base camp for 5,000 on the southern outskirts of Baghdad, is in the planning stage.

Return to Germany for some Troops

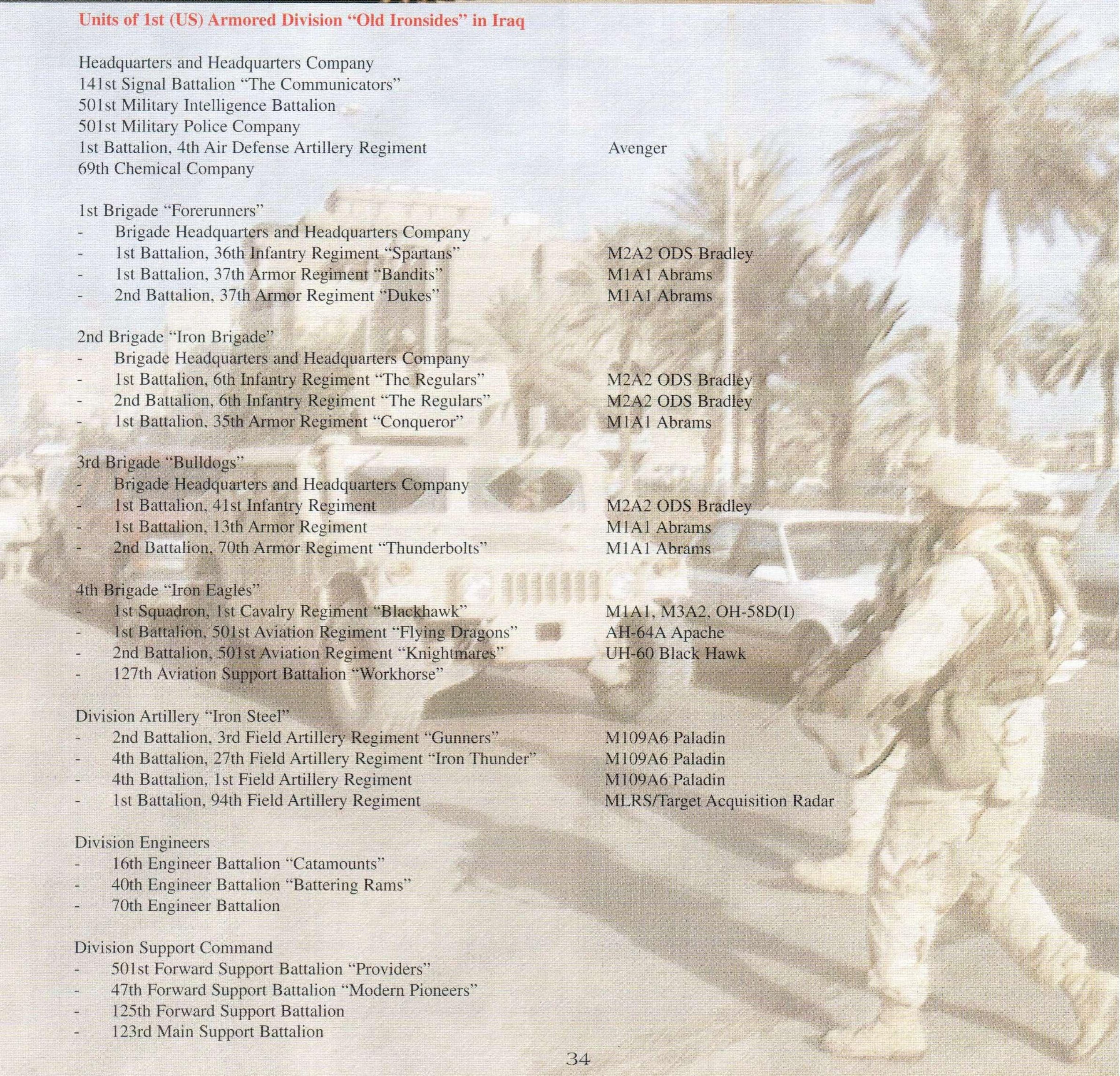
While the 1st Armored Division kept a high presence in the city of Baghdad and in the outskirts of the capital most of the time since May 2003, this changed at the end of the year. As local security forces such as the Iraqi Police and the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps (ICDC) began to take over the mission to maintain law and order on the streets of Baghdad, the US troops and their heavy equipment moved out of sight of the locals.

In January 2004, troops of the 1st Cavalry Division began to replace the 1st Armored Division in Baghdad, with the transfer of authority scheduled to take place in mid-April of 2004. While the "Old Ironsides" returned to their barracks in Germany, the Cavalry soldiers made themselves a home in Baghdad. The fresh troops moved into the large newly built US bases situated outside Baghdad. These bases were partly constructed by the engineers of the 1st Armored Division.

[Editor's note: Because of a marked increase in violence and unrest around Baghdad in early April 2004, the soldiers with the 1st Armored Division who had not yet returned home were told they would be remaining in Iraq for up to three months.



With a Bradley armore vehicle on hand, the U troops could return fire wit its 25mm chain gun if sniper were to open fire o the crowd.

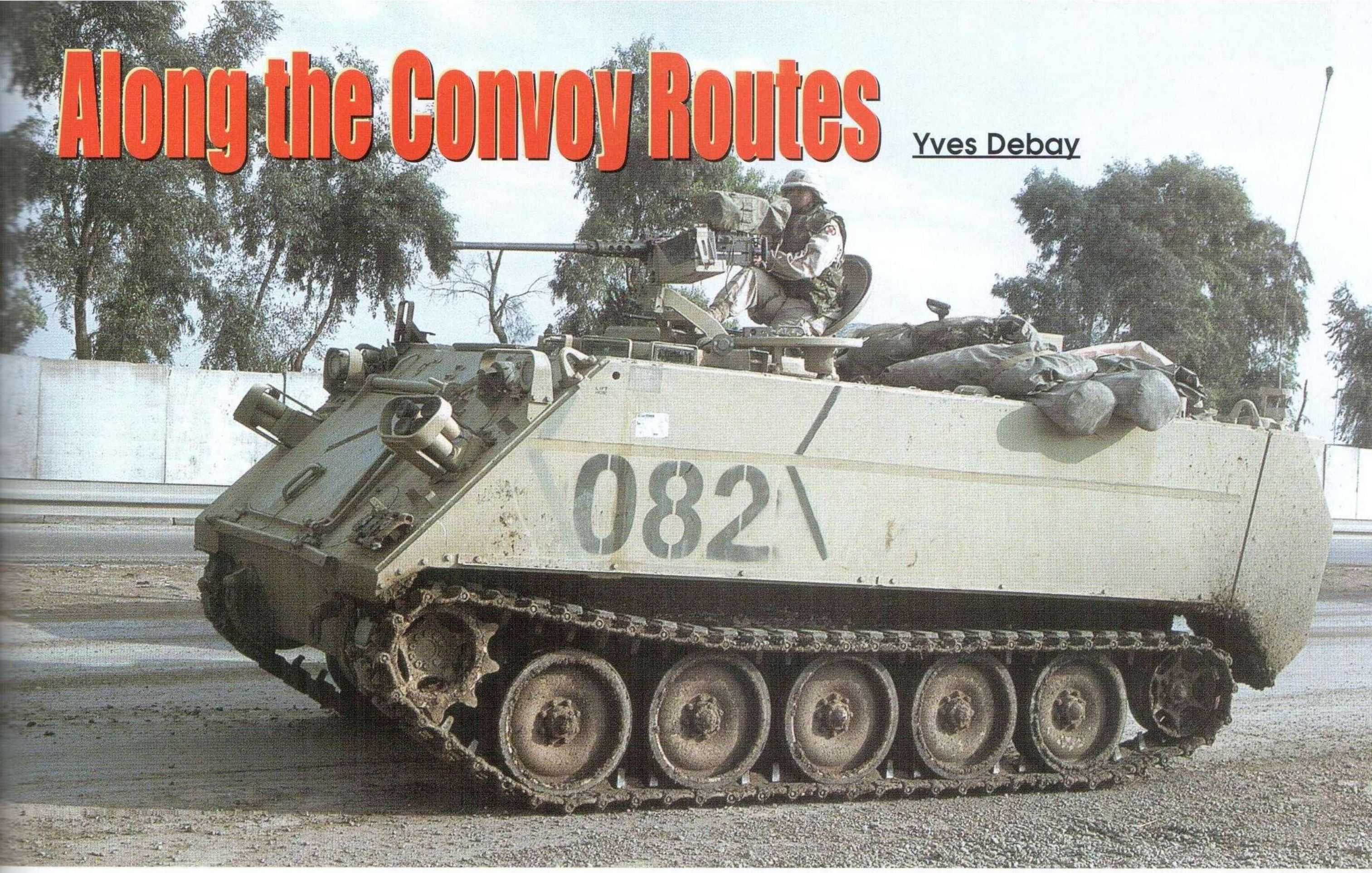


Units of 1st (US) Armored Division “Old Ironsides” in Iraq

Headquarters and Headquarters Company	
141st Signal Battalion “The Communicators”	
501st Military Intelligence Battalion	
501st Military Police Company	
1st Battalion, 4th Air Defense Artillery Regiment	Avenger
69th Chemical Company	
1st Brigade “Forerunners”	
- Brigade Headquarters and Headquarters Company	
- 1st Battalion, 36th Infantry Regiment “Spartans”	M2A2 ODS Bradley
- 1st Battalion, 37th Armor Regiment “Bandits”	M1A1 Abrams
- 2nd Battalion, 37th Armor Regiment “Dukes”	M1A1 Abrams
2nd Brigade “Iron Brigade”	
- Brigade Headquarters and Headquarters Company	
- 1st Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment “The Regulars”	M2A2 ODS Bradley
- 2nd Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment “The Regulars”	M2A2 ODS Bradley
- 1st Battalion, 35th Armor Regiment “Conqueror”	M1A1 Abrams
3rd Brigade “Bulldogs”	
- Brigade Headquarters and Headquarters Company	
- 1st Battalion, 41st Infantry Regiment	M2A2 ODS Bradley
- 1st Battalion, 13th Armor Regiment	M1A1 Abrams
- 2nd Battalion, 70th Armor Regiment “Thunderbolts”	M1A1 Abrams
4th Brigade “Iron Eagles”	
- 1st Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment “Blackhawk”	M1A1, M3A2, OH-58D(I)
- 1st Battalion, 501st Aviation Regiment “Flying Dragons”	AH-64A Apache
- 2nd Battalion, 501st Aviation Regiment “Knightmares”	UH-60 Black Hawk
- 127th Aviation Support Battalion “Workhorse”	
Division Artillery “Iron Steel”	
- 2nd Battalion, 3rd Field Artillery Regiment “Gunners”	M109A6 Paladin
- 4th Battalion, 27th Field Artillery Regiment “Iron Thunder”	M109A6 Paladin
- 4th Battalion, 1st Field Artillery Regiment	M109A6 Paladin
- 1st Battalion, 94th Field Artillery Regiment	MLRS/Target Acquisition Radar
Division Engineers	
- 16th Engineer Battalion “Catamounts”	
- 40th Engineer Battalion “Battering Rams”	
- 70th Engineer Battalion	
Division Support Command	
- 501st Forward Support Battalion “Providers”	
- 47th Forward Support Battalion “Modern Pioneers”	
- 125th Forward Support Battalion	
- 123rd Main Support Battalion	

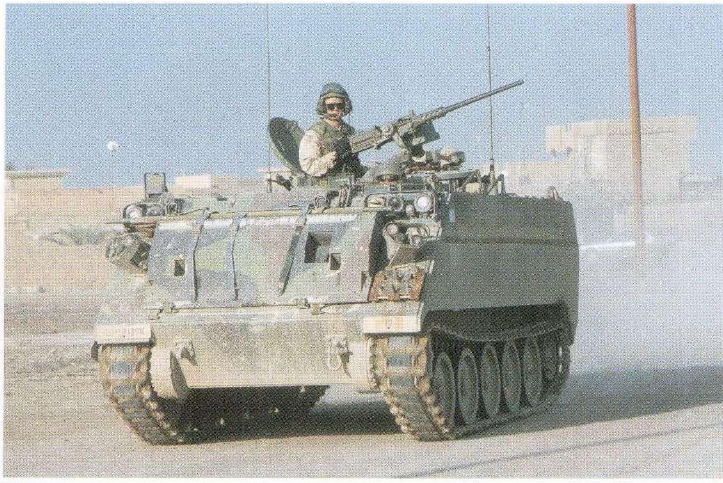
Along the Convoy Routes

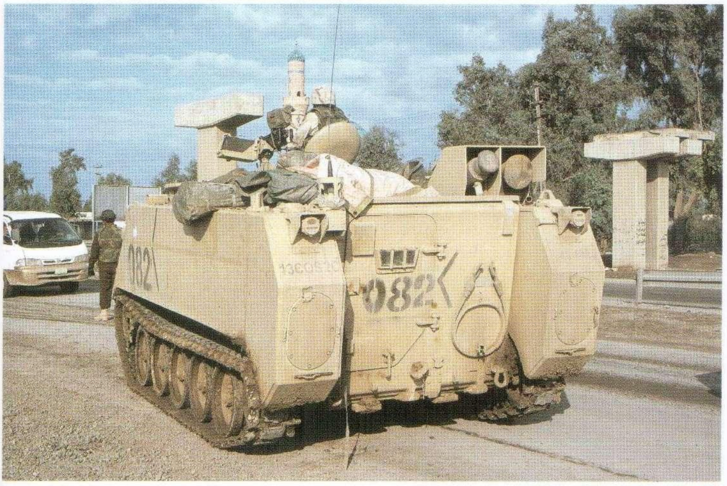
Yves Debay



Here a M1059A3 smoke generating vehicle keeps watch on an important checkpoint on the road west of Baghdad.

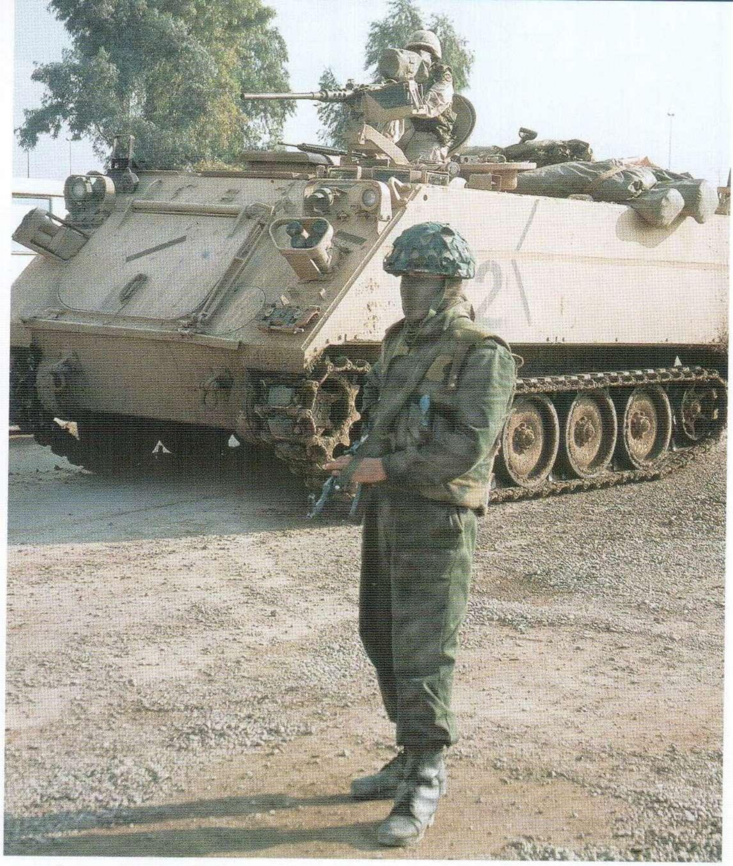
An M113 painted in Central European camouflage belonging to the 139th Engineers patrols north of Baghdad. Note that the machine gunner enjoys no protection from an armored shield. The M113 is, of course, very vulnerable to an attack from an RPG-7 anti-tank round.



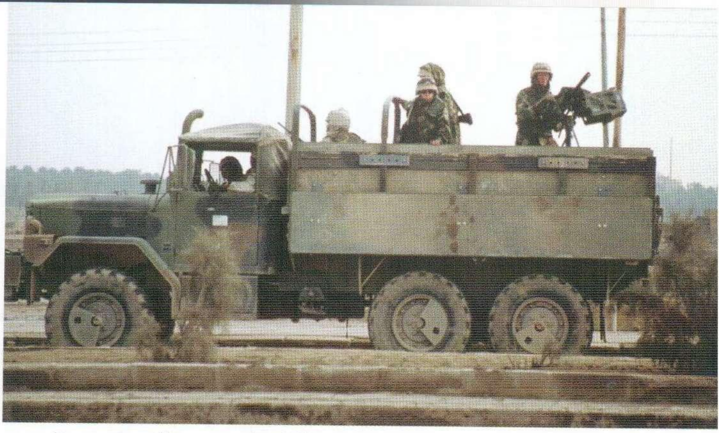


This is a new version of the "cloud makers" with a more modern smoke dispenser. The unit using this M1059A3 is the 2nd Company of 13th COSCOM from Fort Hood, Texas.

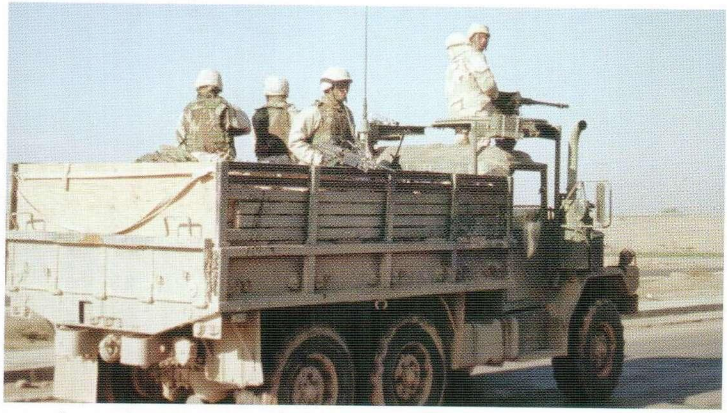
When a battle is not raging, the engineers operate just like other soldiers involved in anti-guerilla operations.



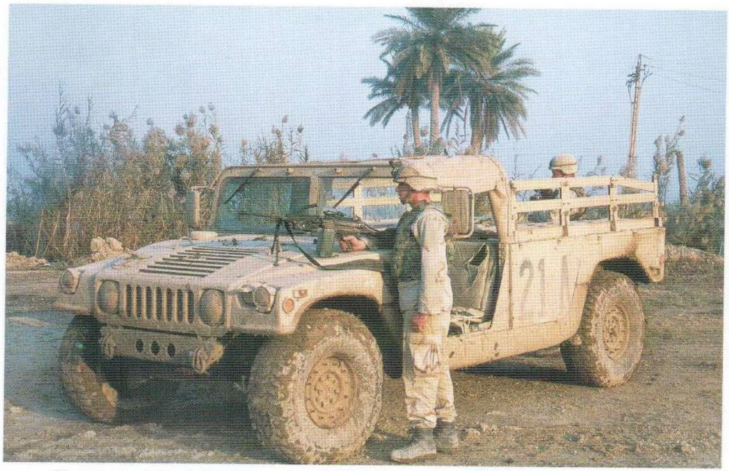
Some Iraqi militiamen from the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps (ICDC) support the 13th COSCOM at the checkpoint. Members of the resistance force consider them to be collaborators, so the ICDC troops work with their faces masked.



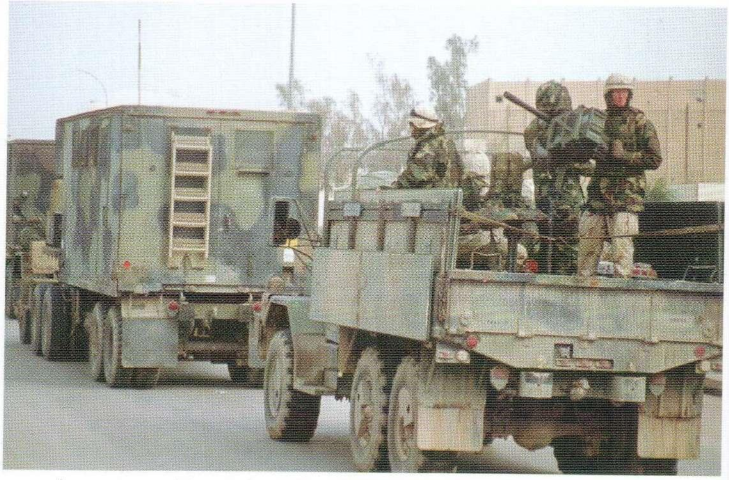
In a guerilla war, logistic convoys are particularly vulnerable, especially since a good number of vehicles are not armed or protected with armor. As a result, armored trucks, an old idea from the Vietnam era, are once again in use, this time in Iraq.



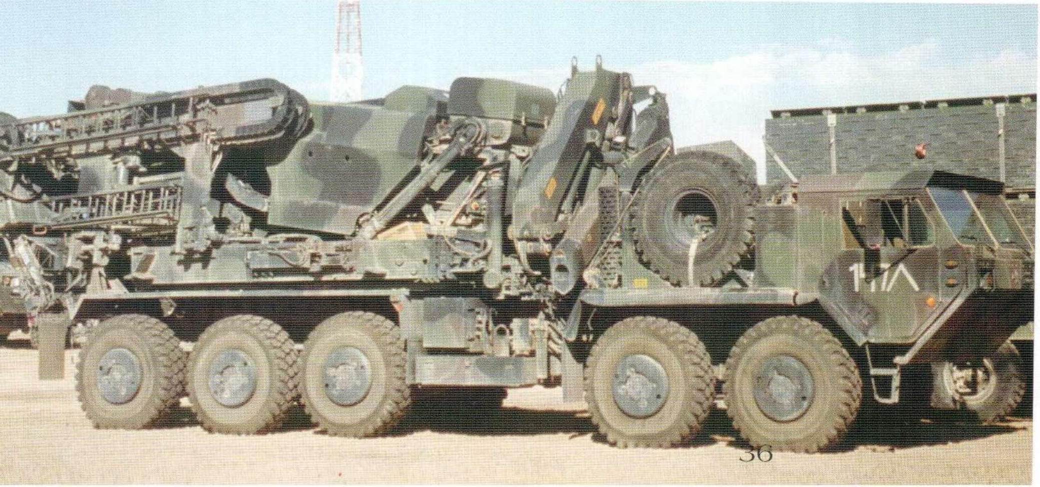
An armored truck undertakes some protective action in Iraq. The truck may belong to the 4th Infantry Division since the photograph was taken near Tikrit.



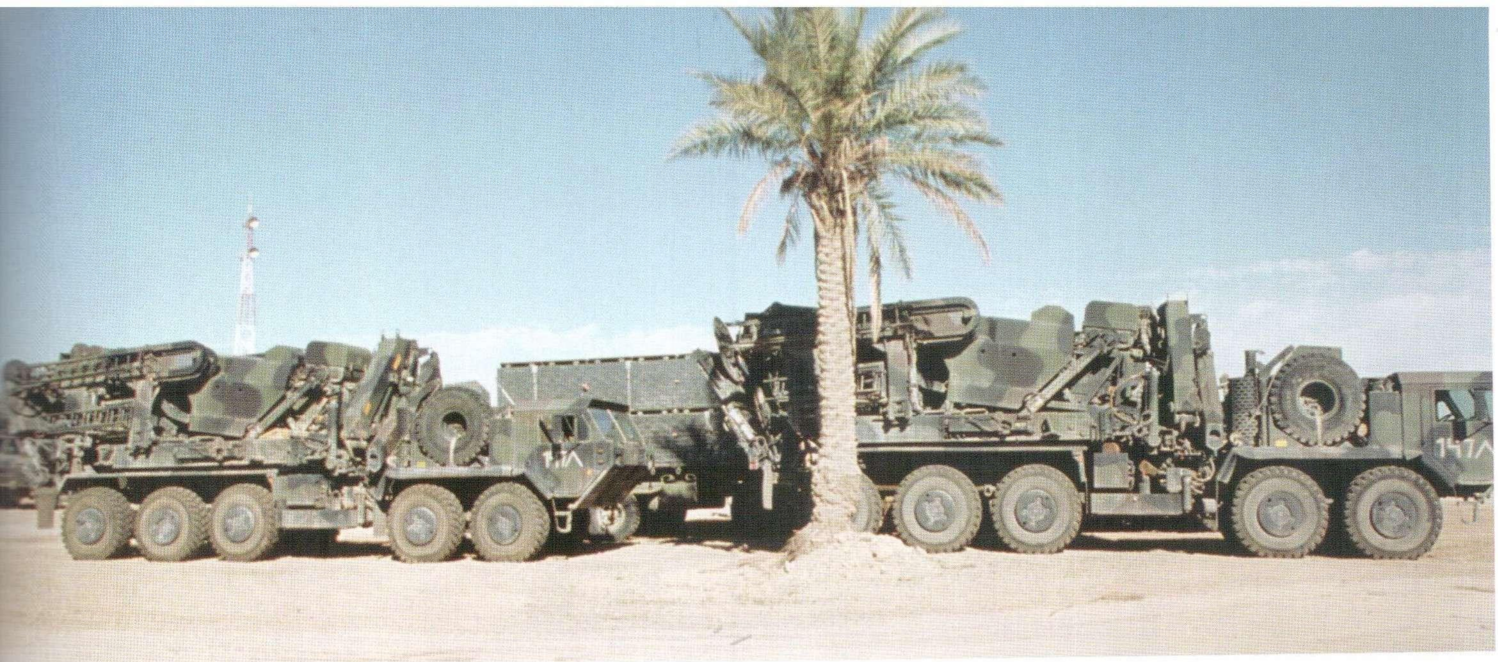
These soldiers belong to AR-4 Surveillance Unit of E Company, 51st Infantry Long Range Surveillance of the US Army's V Corps based in Ramstadt, Germany. They are setting fire to some bushes to clear the firing zone in front of the US compound on the Fallujah-Baghdad road.



An armored truck from the 878th Engineers protects a convoy in Samawah. Note the Mk.19 grenade launcher on the truck platform.

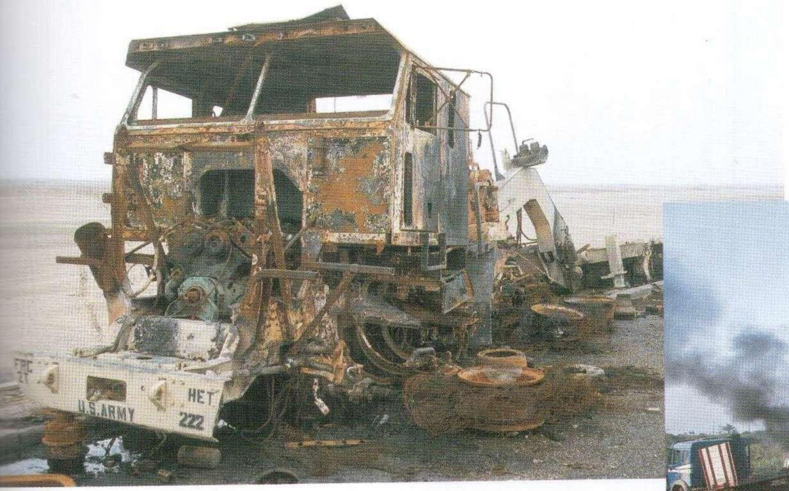


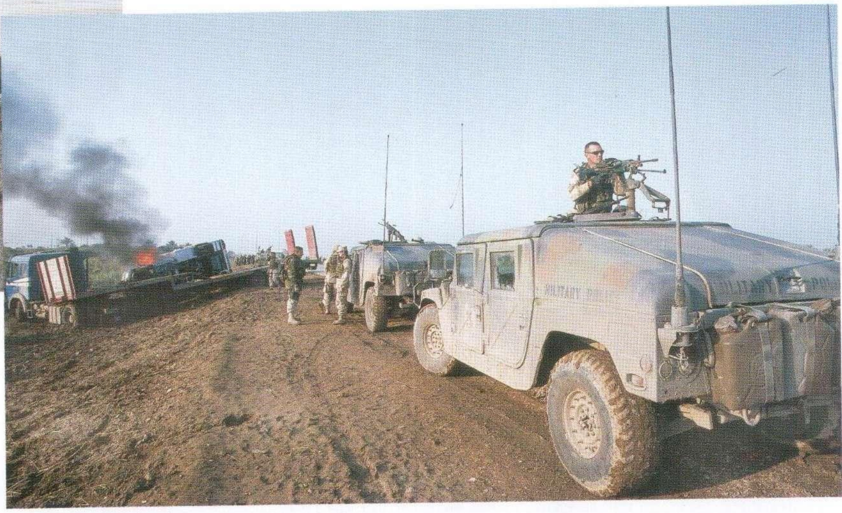
This impressive vehicle is an Oshkosh heavy engineer vehicle attached to the 4th Infantry Division.



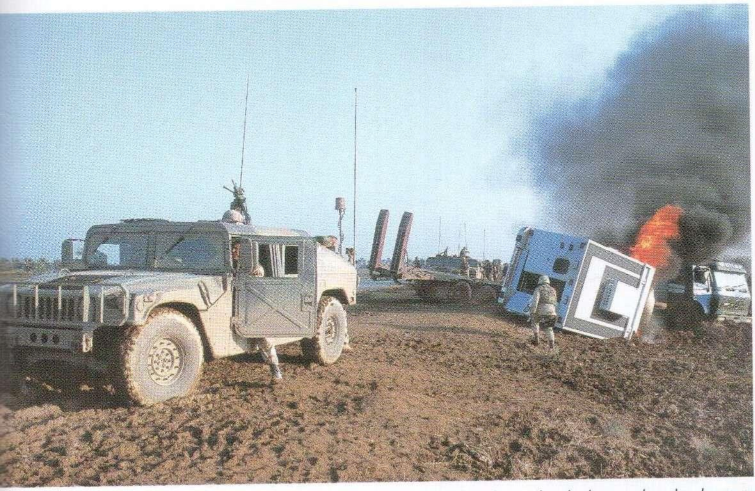
A pair of huge Oshkosh engineer trucks from the 4th Infantry Division seen in Tikrit.

Wreckage of a US Army truck on the highway between Basra and Nasiriyah.



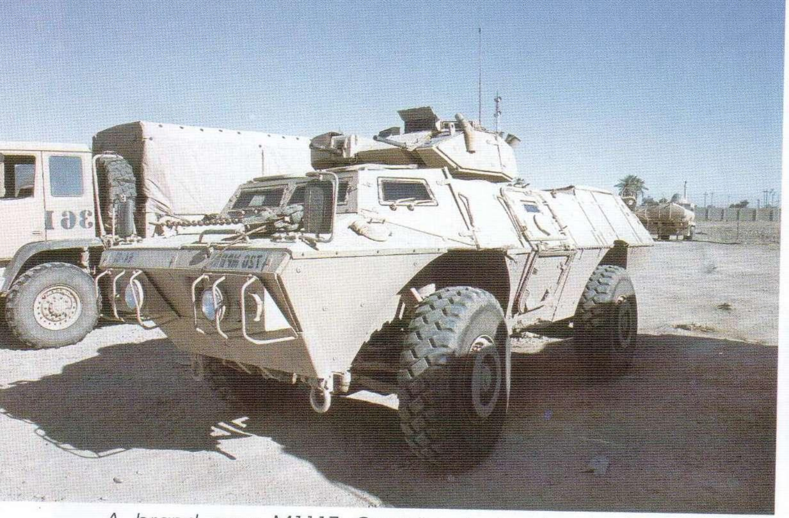


US military policemen belonging to 220th MP Company arrive on the scene of an accident where a brand new GMC truck veered off the road. It was carrying on its trailer a mobile medical unit mounted on a smaller truck.

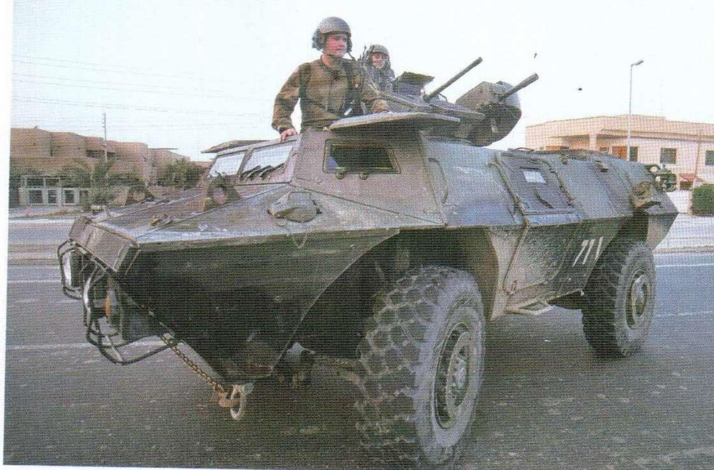


The MPs were forced to fire a few warning shots in order to keep the crowd of Iraqis at a distance. The decision was made to set fire to the GMC truck to prevent looting and other problems.

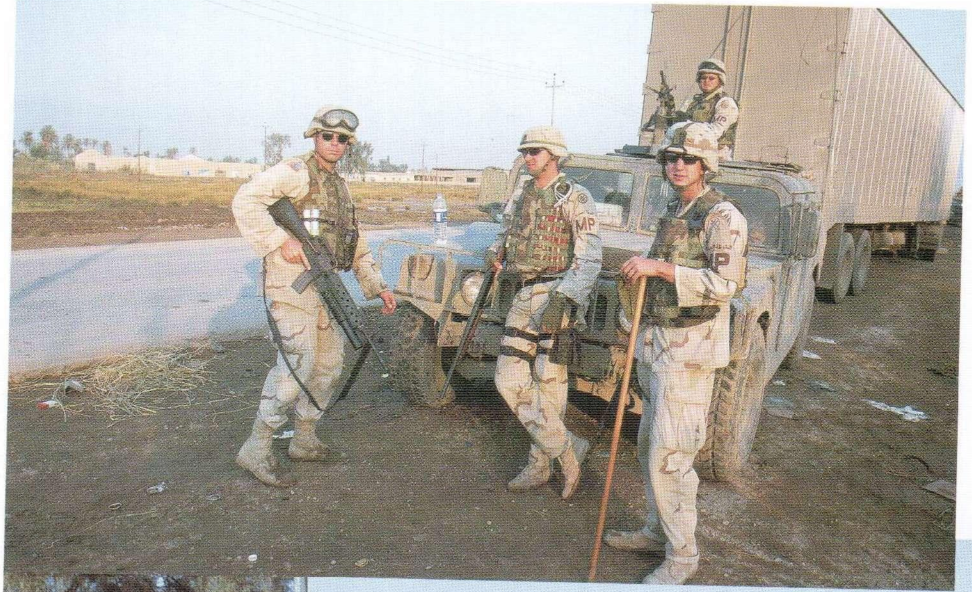
Two alert GIs from an unidentified unit in a Baghdad suburb.



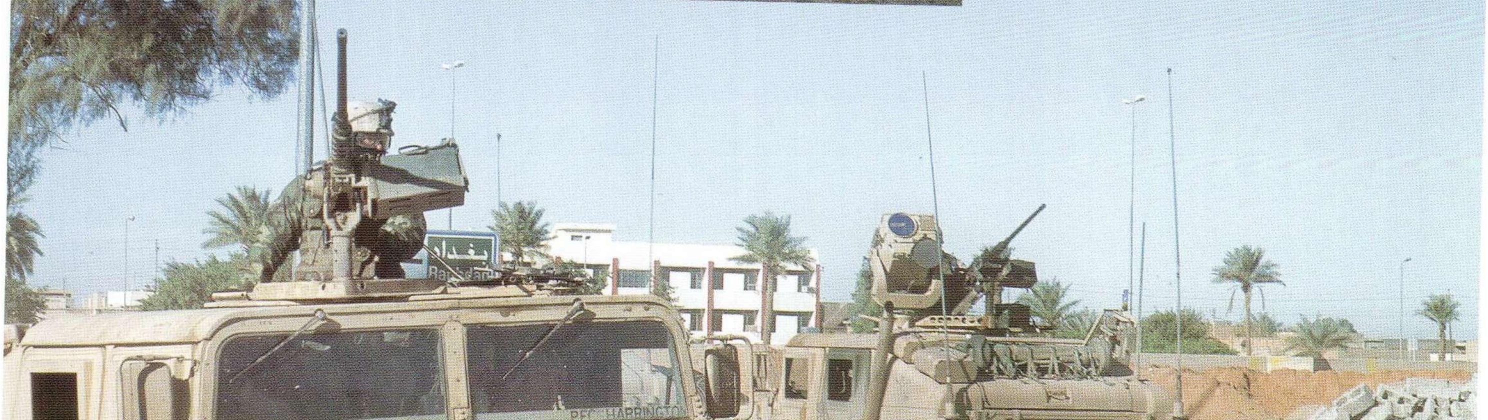
A brand new M1117 Guardian belonging to the 720th MP Battalion sits in the parking area at the former Saddam Palace in Tikrit. The Guardian has the same turret as the USMC AAV-7.



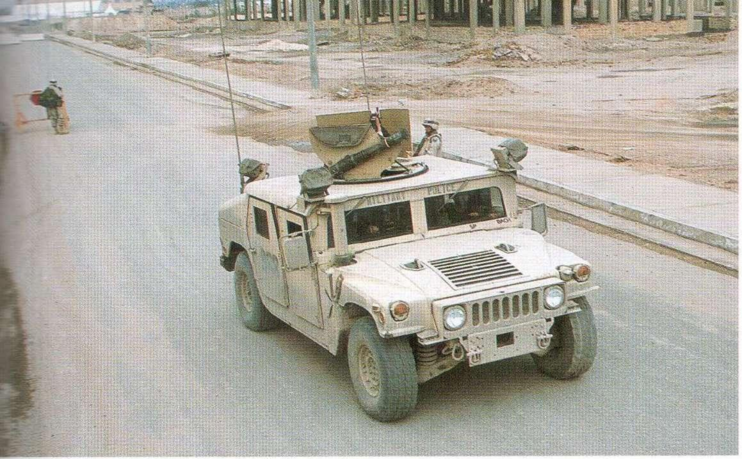
Just before sunset, soldiers of the 793rd Military Police Battalio "Spartans", 18th Military Police Brigade mounted on a M111 Guardian Armored Security Vehicle quickly reacted to secure the site in a dangerous area west of Baghdad where a fuel truck ha crashed.



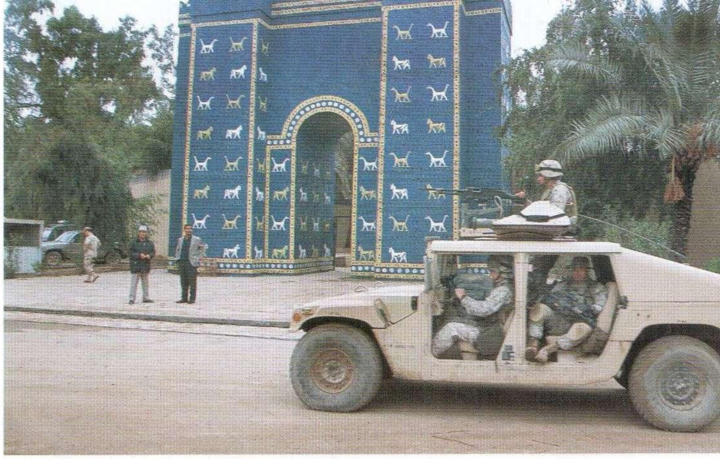
MPs are omnipresent on the Iraqi roads, and they are paying a heavy price during their mission. These MPs, who probably belong to the 220th MP Company, were seen at the entrance of Al Samawah. Note the shotgun.



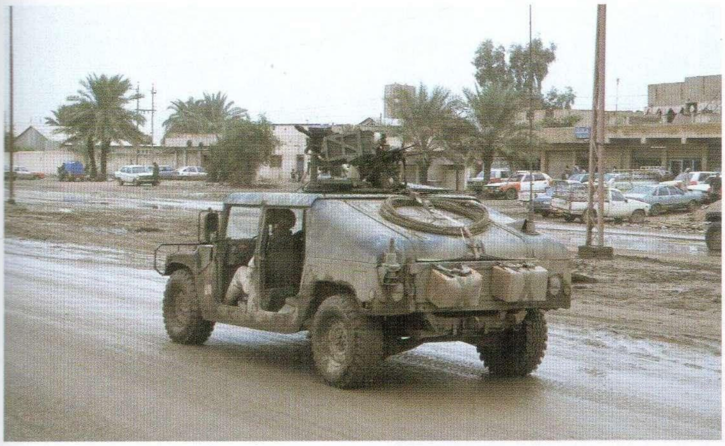
HMMWVs belonging to an unidentified MP unit near Tikrit. Note the IR searchlight on the roof of the second vehicle.



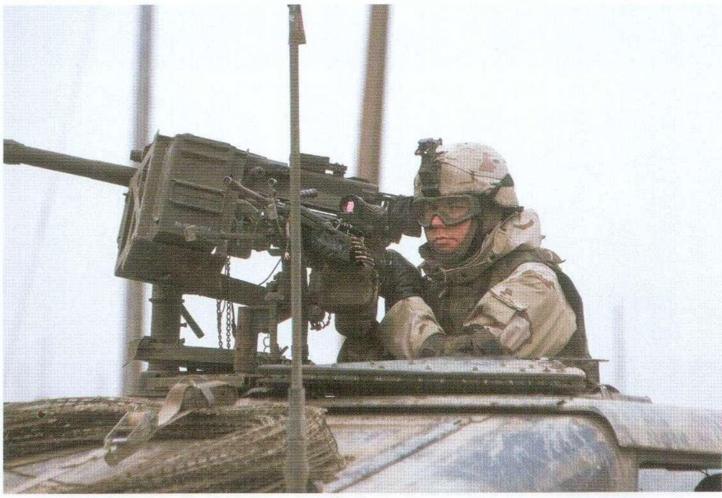
A HMMWV from an unidentified MP company passes a San Salvadoran checkpoint near Najaf. Note the AT-4 that is ready for use.



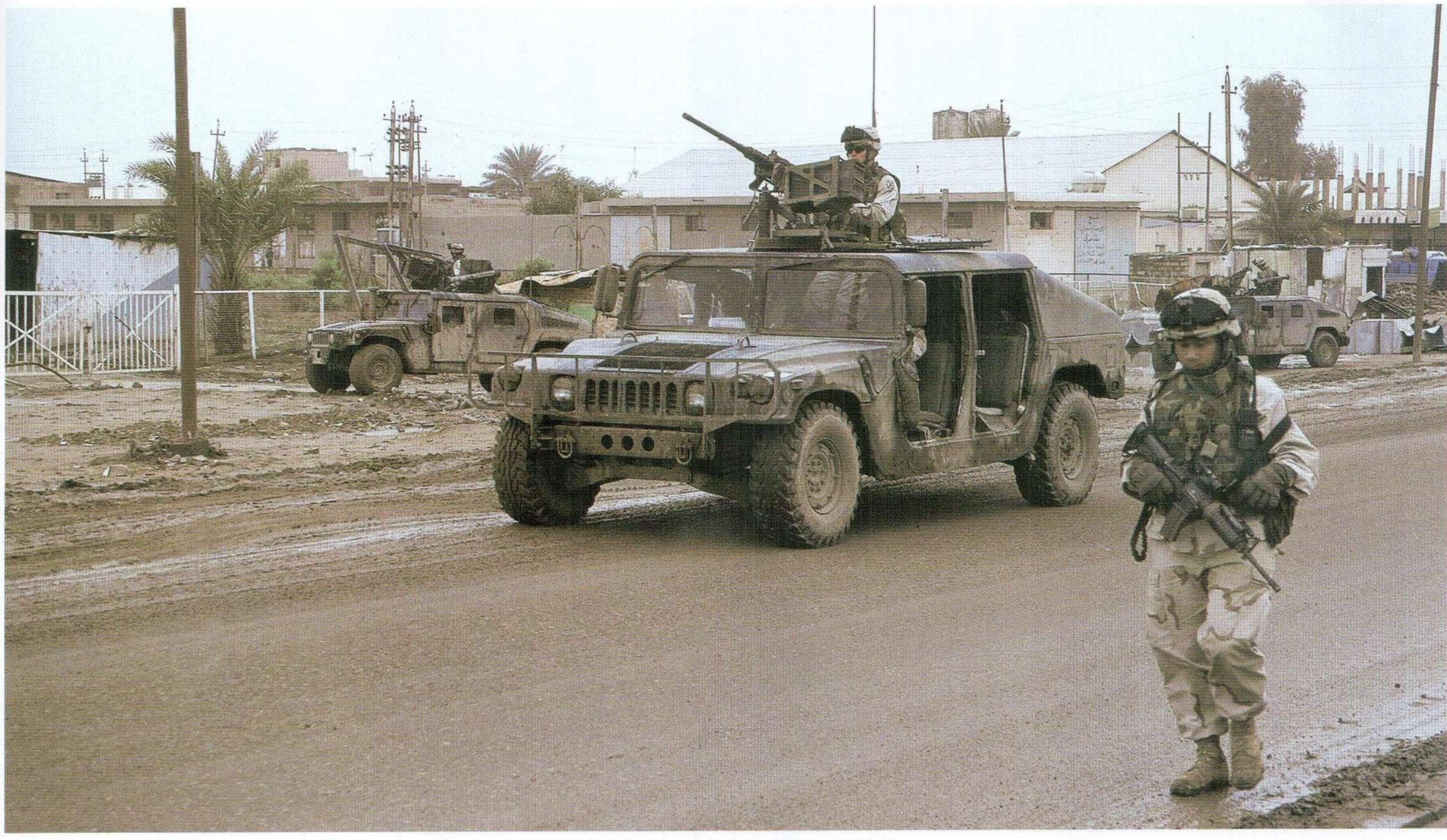
A Military Police HMMWV is parked in front of Ishtar's gate at Camp Babylon near Al Hillah.



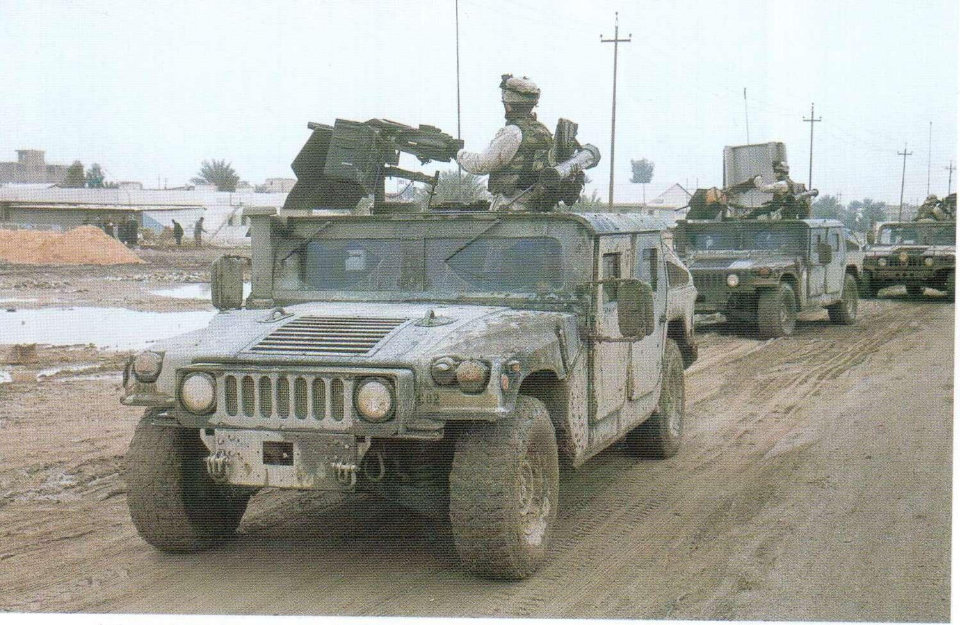
The soldiers of the 10th Mountain Division gave their permission to have photographs taken in their presence, though they did not provide any information. The heavy coat of mud on this HMMWV obscured the unit operating the vehicle, but it was photographed in the area of responsibility of the 82nd Airborne.



Vigilant as he mans an Mk.19 grenade launcher, this soldier from the 10th Mountain Division knows full well of the dangers that lurk for the US forces on patrol.

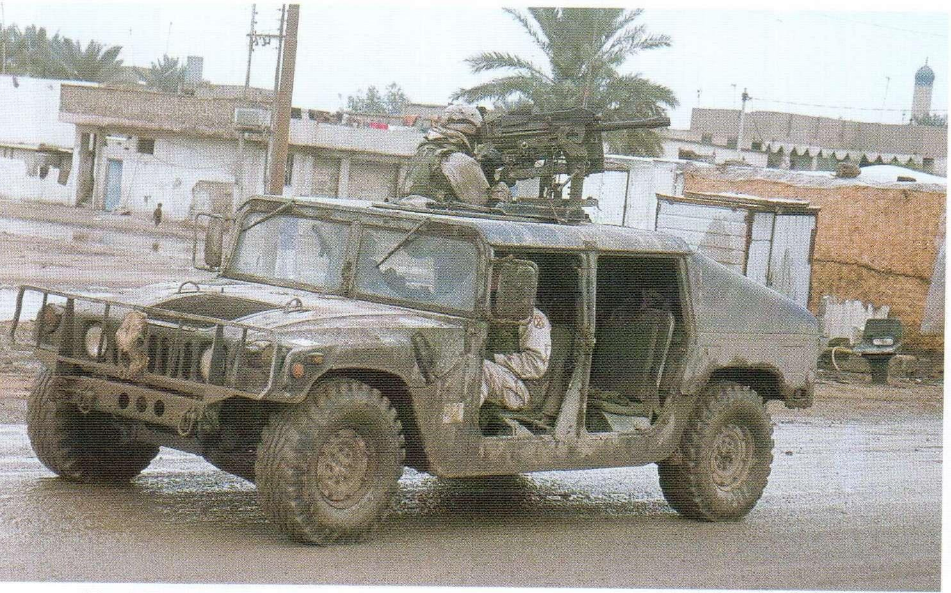


Troops from the 10th Mountain Division perform patrol duties in Iskanderiya (Alexandrie).

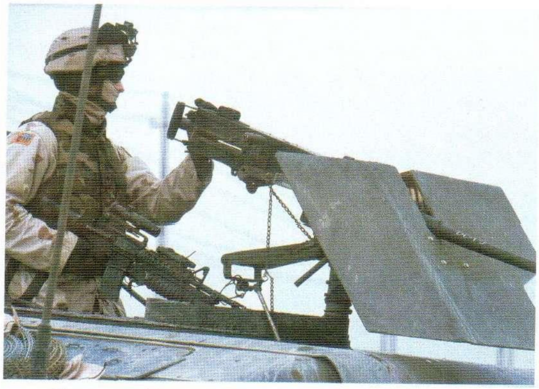


A line of vehicles operated by troops from the 10th Mountain Division pull to the side of the road during a patrol.

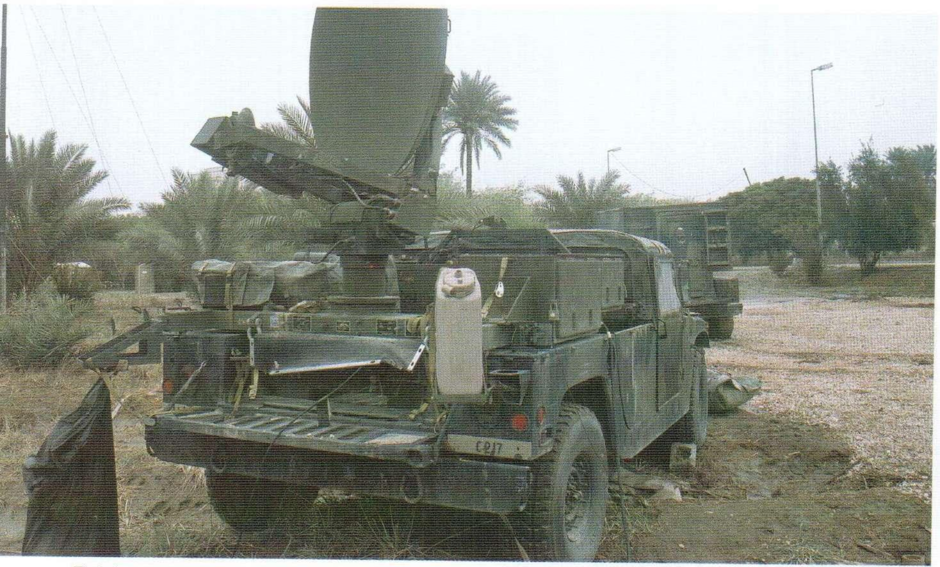
A US solider carefully examines the side of the road as he searches for Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs).



Modelers should pay particular attention to the natural weathering that gives character to this HMMWV used during the patrol by elements of the 10th Mountain Division.

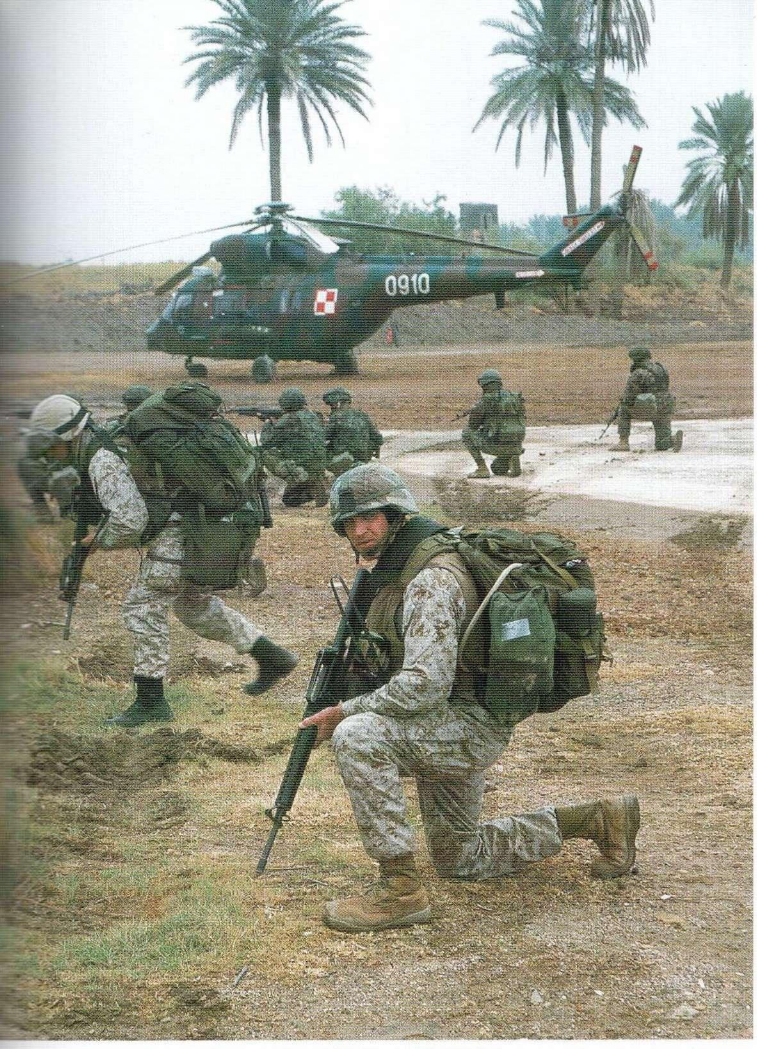


The machine gunner of this HMMWV has plenty of firepower at his disposal to protect the men on the ground looking for IEDs.

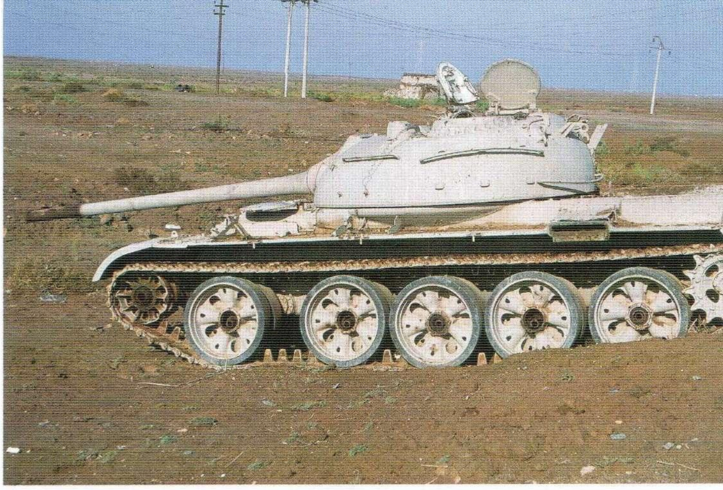


This is an interesting view of a Signal HMMWV that belongs to the 141st Signal of the 1st Armored Division. The unit is tasked with providing communication between the Polish HQ at Camp Babylon and the HQ of CJTF-7.

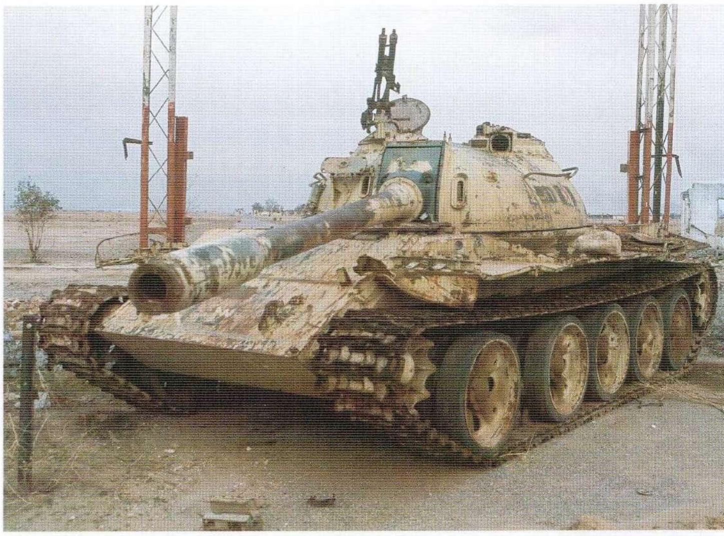
The USMC ANGLICO team is detached and works with the Polish air cavalry team.



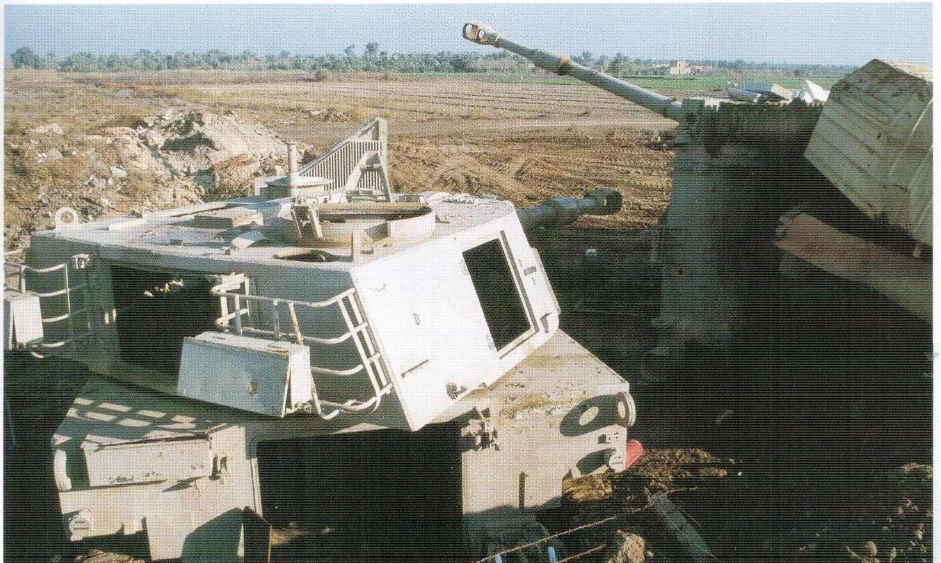
The elite soldiers of the USMC ANGLICO team, who are in charge of close air support, are from the 4th Marine Division FCT-3 of New Orleans.



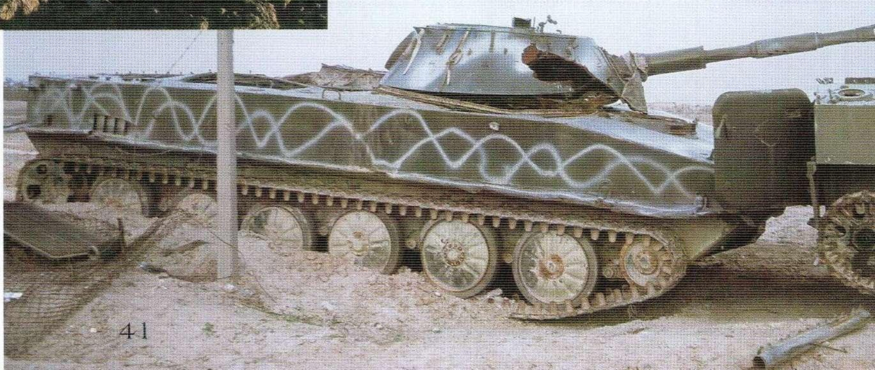
A lot of wrecked armor and artillery are visible along the roadsides in Iraq. This T-55 tank was discovered north of Basra.



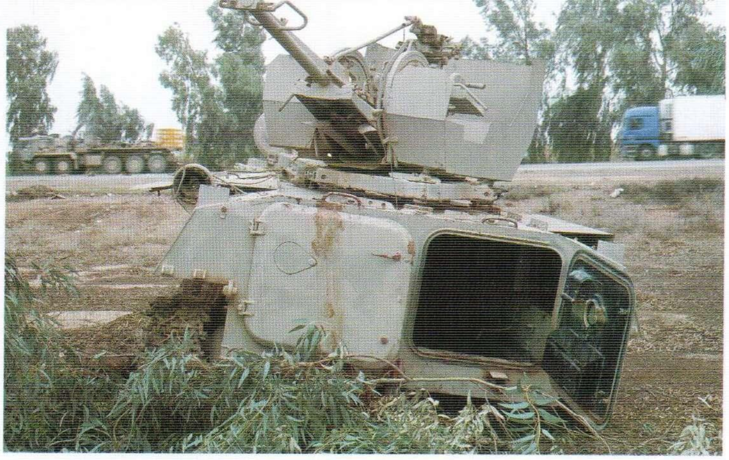
This T-55 was found at a barracks south of Tikrit.



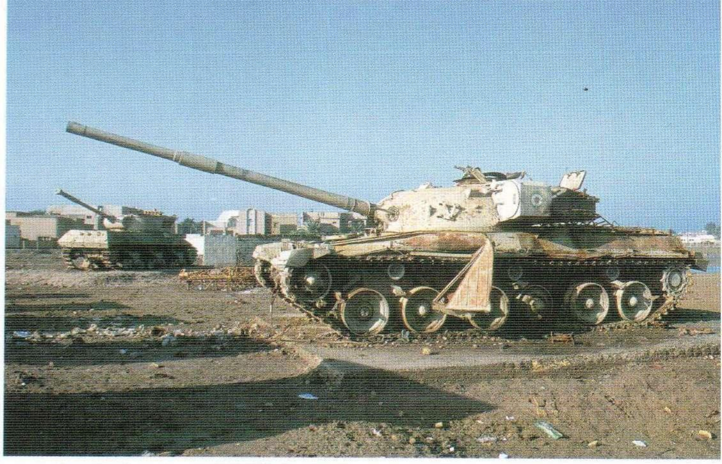
These remains of an ex-Kuwaiti M109 self-propelled howitzer were located north of Baghdad.



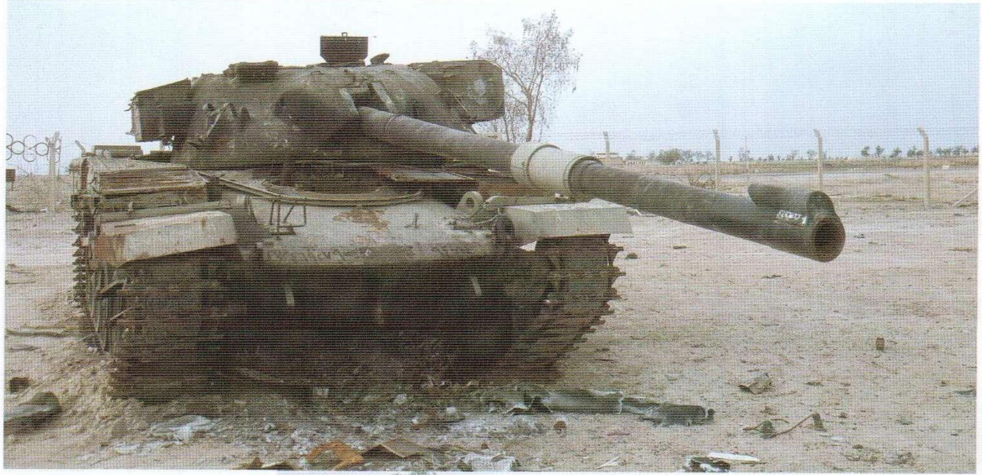
This PT-76 amphibious tank that was discovered south of Tikrit seems to have been spray painted with silver or gray paint either for graffiti or a crude attempt at camouflage.



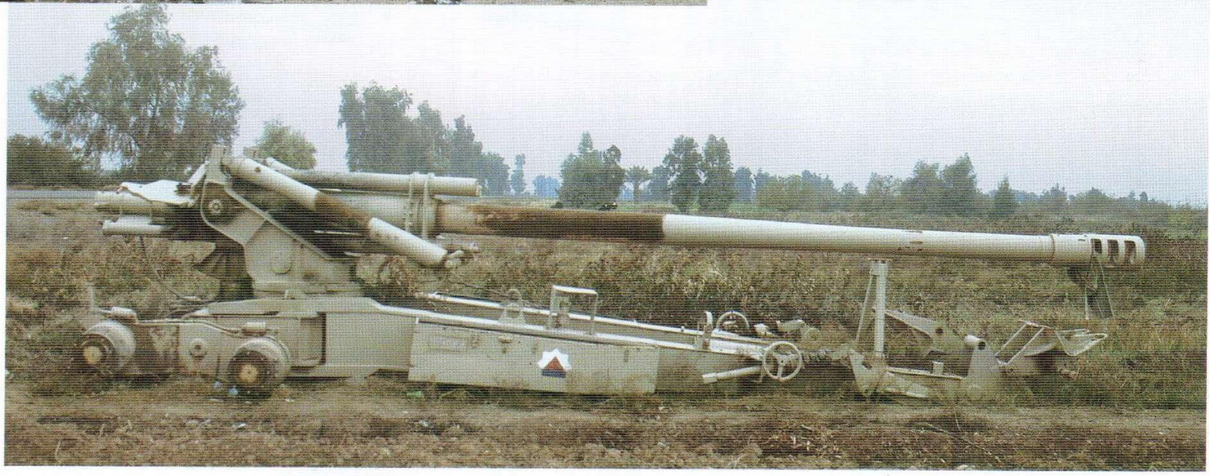
An MT-LB fitted with an anti-aircraft gun that was photographed in Samara.



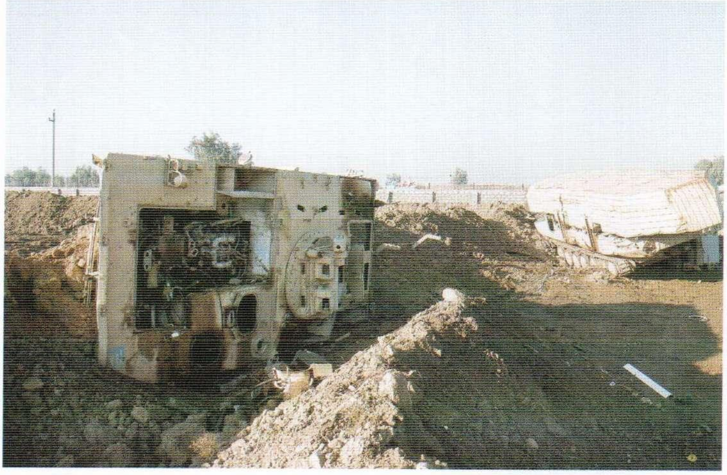
An ex-Iranian Chieftain tank sits quietly under the Iraqi sun in Nasiriyah.



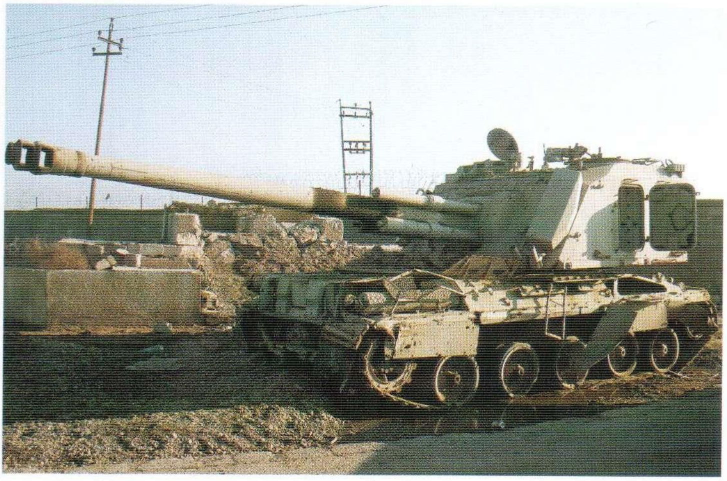
Another Iraqi Chieftain that will no longer pose a threat to Coalition forces.



Once a very impressive weapon in service with the Iraqi Republican Guard, this GH N-45 155mm gun howitzer was captured near Baghdad.



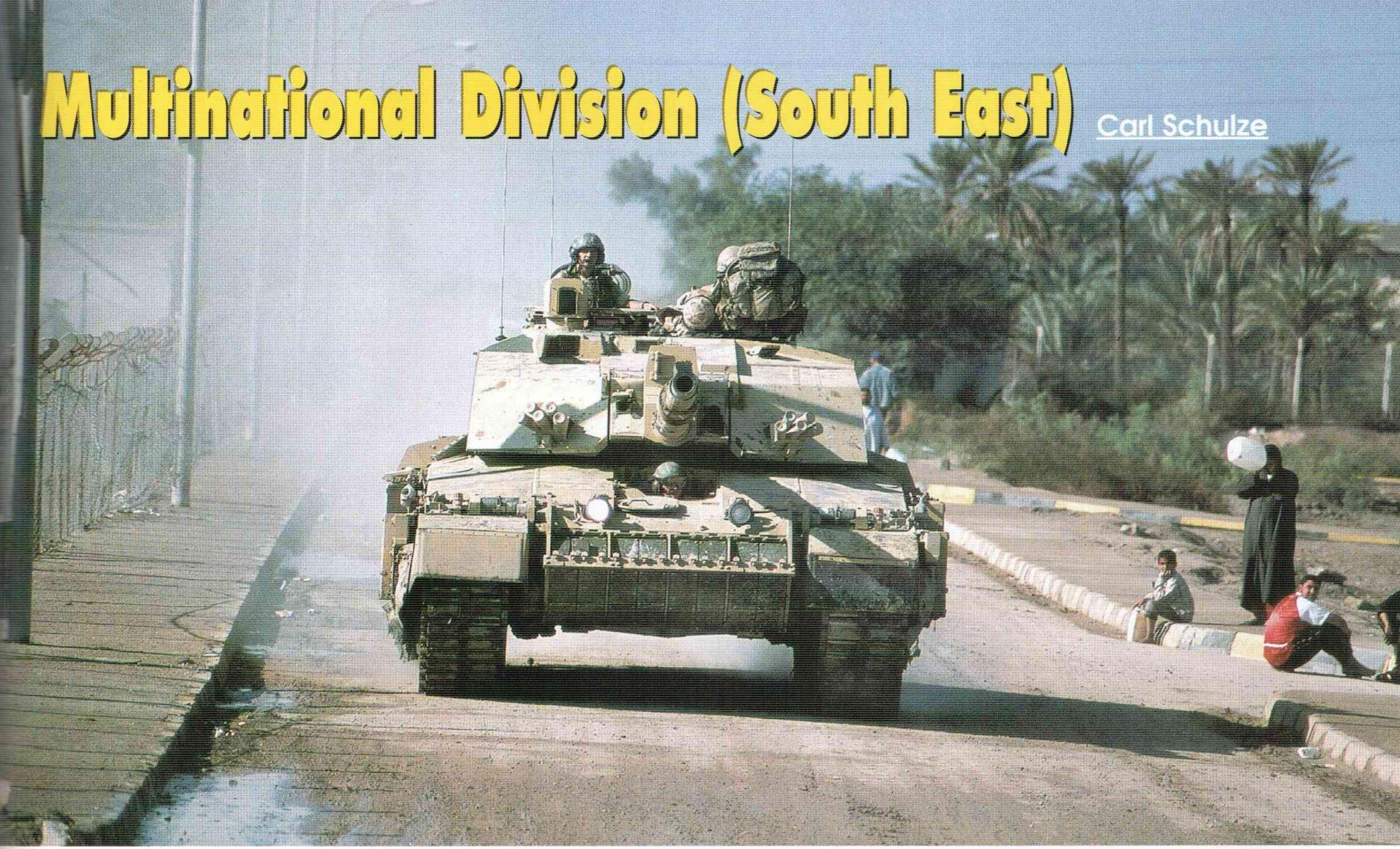
An AMX-19 VOA artillery observer that was left behind near Baghdad.



The Iraqi Republican Guard fielded this AUF-1 155mm self-propelled howitzer at one time. It was captured north of Baghdad.

Multinational Division (South East)

Carl Schulze



A Challenger 2 main battle tank belonging to D Squadron, Queen's Royal Hussars, an armored regiment that is equipped with Challenger 2s fitted with add-on armor. Due to the peace support-type mission of the British forces in southern Iraq, the unit seldom uses its tanks for patrols. This Challenger 2 is returning from a rare presence patrol.

During the initial phase of the war in Iraq, in March and April 2003, the troops of the 1st (UK) Armoured Division and the 1st (US) Marine Expeditionary Force secured the southeast region of Iraq, including the Al Faw Peninsular, the Al Rumaila oil fields, and the Basrah region. While the US Marines pressed on toward Baghdad, the British forces of the 1st (UK) Armoured Division, including troops from the 7th Armoured Brigade "The Desert Rats," the 16 Air Assault Brigade and 3 Commando Brigade, destroyed the remains of the 51st Iraqi Mechanized Division in the region.

After the fighting had ceased, the mission of the British forces changed from fighting to a peace support-style of operation. The British soldiers began to stop the looting, established law and order, reopened the harbor of Umm Qasr for ships with humanitarian supplies, and started to establish local authority. This article was written nine months after US President Bush declared the end of the fighting in Iraq. In this time the security situation in the Area of Responsibility (AOR) of the British forces has become more and more stable. The area that in the early days of the conflict was ruled only by the British forces is now controlled by troops from 10 nations, the troops of the Multinational Division (South East) [MND (SE)].

The deployment of British troops to Iraq is referred to by the codename Operation "Telic." Operation "Telic I" refers to the war in March and April 2003. The troops of Operation "Telic I" were replaced by fresh troops in June 2003. The troop deployment between June and November 2003 was called Operation "Telic II." From November 2003 the bulk of the British troop contingent of Operation "Telic III" were drawn from the 20 Armoured Brigade based in Paderborn, Germany.

The AOR of the Multinational Division (South East) covers four Iraqi provinces and consists of one quarter of the Iraqi territory. The provinces are Al Muthanna, Basrah, Dhi Qar, and Maysan. Situated north of the AOR of the MND (SE) is the AOR of the Polish-led MND (CS). The border of

Close-up of a British tanker in the hatch of a Challenger 2. Most of the patrolling is done by the troops of Queen's Royal Hussars in Land Rover "Snatch" armored vehicles that were deployed from Northern Ireland to the Gulf region.

D Squadron, Queen's Royal Hussars partially replaced the 2nd Royal Tank Regiment (2 RTR) and took over some of the 2 RTR's Challenger 2s. The unit's Challenger 2s are mainly used for base security or as gate guards at important infrastructure sites secured by the regiment. Here a Challenger 2 guards a power plant north of Basrah.

Iran is situated on the east of the AOR and runs along the AOR for 350km (217 miles) from the Al Faw peninsular to the boundary of the Wasit province. Kuwait is located south of the AOR while the western boundary of the AOR of the MND (SE) is the Iraq-Saudi Arabian border, 300km (186 miles) of which belong to the AOR.

The bulk of the region's population of five million Iraqis lives in the big cities of Basrah, Nasiriyah, As Samawah, and Al Amarah, all of which are situated along the Euphrates and Tigris River valleys or close to the Shatt al Arab. The majority of the population, about 85% in the region, are Shi'ite. Due to this fact, it is believed at the time of writing that the security situation in southern Iraq is relatively stable. In the past, the Shi'ites were persecuted by Saddam Hussein, which means that the war and the destruction of the old regime gave the Shi'ites a freedom they were not used to in the past.

The mission of the MND (SE) is to establish and maintain a stable, secure environment and to support the reconstruction of civil society with its own authorities. One of the major tasks of the MND (SE) is to keep open the Coalition forces' lifeline to the harbors of Umm Qasr and Kuwait. Another task is the protection of the Rumailia oil fields, a number of oil pipelines and one of the major Iraqi refineries. Humanitarian support is also part of the mission. In the first month following the official end of the war, British troops repaired the power plants in the AOR, increasing the supply of electricity to levels higher than before the war. In addition, the forces restored the water supply and the sewage service, repaired schools, rebuilt roads, cleared mines, provided medical assistance, and circumvented oil-smuggling operations.

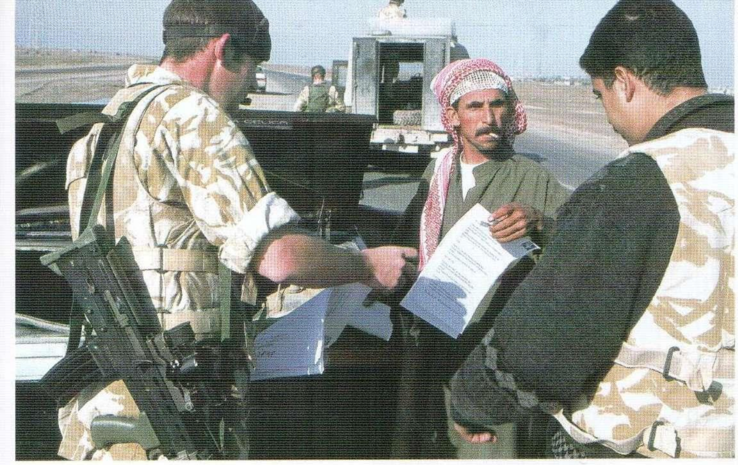
Under command of the headquarters of the MND (SE), which is based at Basrah International Airport, are troops from nine nations. Six of these are members of NATO and two will become NATO members in mid-2004. Of the 16,500 troops of the MND (SE), 10,850 are British soldiers while the rest belong to the following countries:

- Italy: Mechanized Infantry Brigade with 3000 troops.
- Netherlands: Marine Battalion Battle Group with 1100 troops.
- Denmark: Mechanized Infantry Battalion with 460 soldiers.
- Romania: Mechanized Infantry Battalion with 400 troops.
- Czech Republic: A military police company and a field hospital attached to the HQ of MND (SE). The Czech contingent also includes transport and civil affairs personnel, bringing the contingent to some 326 personnel.
- Norway: Engineer company of the Telemark Battalion with 140 soldiers under command of 35 Engineer Regiment of 20 Armoured Brigade.
- Portugal: A military police company of 130 personnel under command of the MSU of the Italian mechanized brigade.
- Lithuania: Infantry platoon with 50 soldiers.
- New Zealand: Engineer detachment and support staff numbering 40 troops. The detachment forms part of 35 Engineer Regiment.

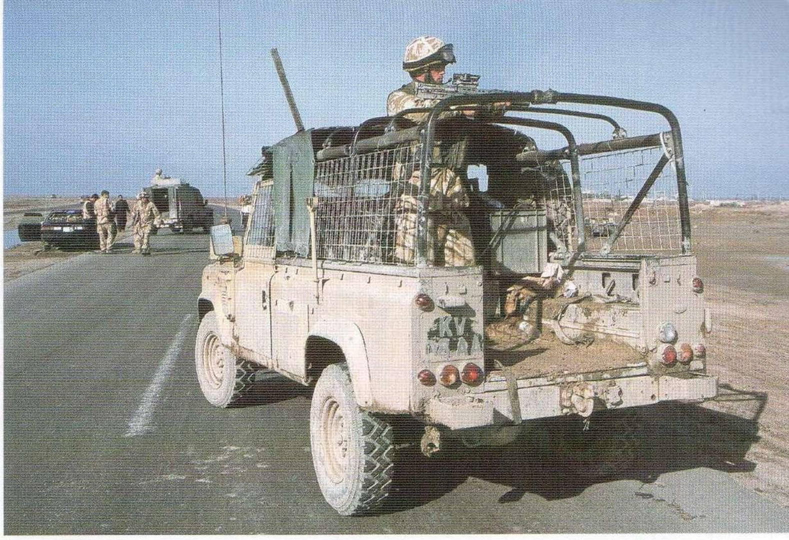
By the end of December 2003, the Coalition forces in MND (SE) were supported by 15,000 Iraqi police officers, 2000 members of the ICDC, a small number of river police members, and 1000 members of the newly formed Iraqi border police.

20 Armoured Brigade

Currently the key asset of the MND (SE) is the 20 Armoured Brigade, which deployed to Iraq from its bases around Paderborn, Germany, at the end of Ramadan in November 2003. The Brigade Headquarters and Signal Squadron are based in the city center of Basrah. Troops of the 1st Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Wales, which is equipped with Saxon wheeled APCs, control the southern part of the city. The northern part of the city is controlled by the troops of Queen's Royal Hussars, which operate in the light role and usually keep their Challenger 2 main battle tanks hidden. The 1st Battalion, The Light Infantry, which is equipped with Warrior armored infantry fighting vehicles, is responsible for the Maysan province.



Troops of D Squadron, Queen's Royal Hussars operate a mobile vehicle checkpoint. Such checkpoints are used to find illegal weapons and explosive equipment. In addition, the troops hand out leaflets with information on the efforts made by the Coalition forces in Iraq.



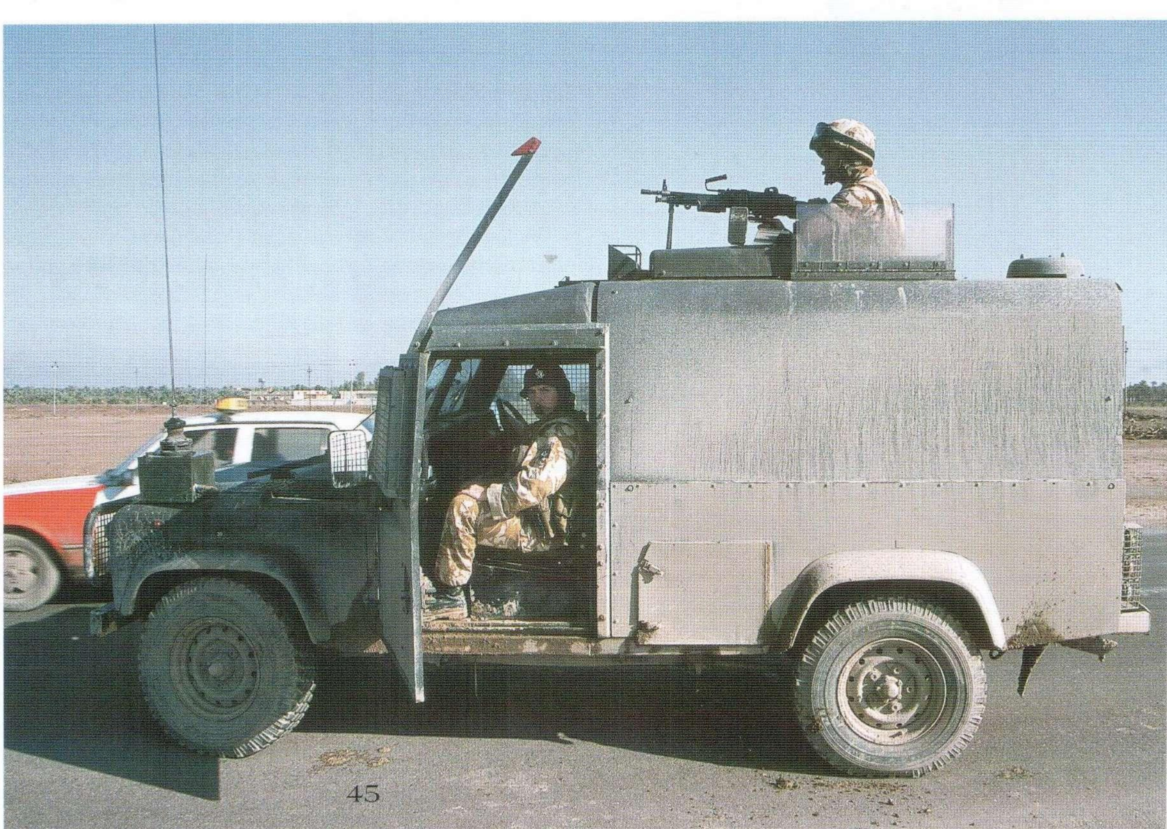
Land Rover XD soft-skinned vehicles converted with gratings are also used for patrols in Iraq.

The brigade's artillery unit, 26 Regiment Royal Artillery, which is equipped with AS-90 self-propelled howitzers, has re-rolled into the light role and patrols the Al Faw peninsular, as well as the area south of Basrah down to the Kuwaiti border. A Company of the 1st Battalion, The Royal Scots supports 26 Regiment RA in these tasks. The 35 Engineer Regiment supports the brigade's battle group with all types of engineer work, including force protection works such as building concrete obstacles in base areas. In addition, the engineers conduct humanitarian tasks in order to support the brigade's CIMIC operations. This includes the building and repairing of bridges over the Shatt al Arab and work on a damaged osmosis plants in order to enhance the supply of fresh water for the local population. The Regimental HQ and two squadrons of the 9th/12th Royal Lancers provide support to 20 Armoured Brigade.

Usually the brigade's main combat assets are equipped with heavy armored vehicles like the Challenger 2 main battle tank, the Warrior armored infantry fighting vehicle, and the AS-90 self-propelled howitzer. But in Iraq they operate in the light role using Land Rovers and other wheeled vehicles. In order to provide sufficient mobility, as well as protection, for the troops on patrol, 200 Land Rover EPVs were deployed to Iraq. The heavy equipment is seldom used and is kept back for the rare occasion when it is needed to provide a robust response. Therefore, most of the battalions from 20 Armoured Brigade left half of their heavy equipment back in Germany.

Also under command of 20 Armoured Brigade is DANCON (the Danish contingent), which is responsible for the area around Al Qurnah. The 20 Armoured Brigade is scheduled to be replaced in April 2004 by the 1 Mechanised Brigade currently based in the UK, which will conduct Operation "Telic IV". Due to continuing instability in Iraq, Britain already is planning a troop presence in that nation up to 2007.

The soldiers of D Squadron, Queen's Royal Hussars are armed with 5.56mm SA-80A2 assault rifles and the 5.56mm MINIMI.



For patrolling, the troops of D Squadron, Queens Royal Hussars traded their Challenger 2 main battle tanks for the armored Land Rover "Snatch." Here such a vehicle is deployed at a mobile vehicle checkpoint. The soldier on top of the vehicle is armed with a 5.56mm MINIMI light machine gun.

Troops of the Light Infantry Battle Group await orders to board a Chinook HC.2 transport helicopter. The Light Infantry Battle Group based in Al Amarah is supported by two Chinooks of 27 Squadron Royal Air Force, and two Gazelle and two Lynx AH.7 helicopters of the Army Air Corps. The helicopter asset not only provides the battle group with an air transport capability for troop transport between the different British bases, but also allows the conduct of airmobile operations such as raids on terrorist positions, airborne vehicle checkpoints or border patrols.

The 1st Battalion, The Light Infantry Battle Group

We will now take a look at the 1st Battalion, The Light Infantry Battle Group to give our readers an idea of the composition of a British Infantry battle group and its routine in Iraq. On 26 October 2003, the 1st Battalion, The Light Infantry Battle Group took over its area of responsibility in southern Iraq. For a lot of the soldiers of the battalion it was the second time they were deployed to Iraq, the first being the war in March and April 2003. In that time two companies of the battalion formed part of the 2nd Royal Tank Regiment Battle Group. At the time of writing in early 2004, the 1 LI Battle Group was providing security for the Maysan Province. The unit is one of five battle groups under command of 20 Armoured Brigade.

1 LI Battle Group Construction

The 1st Battalion, The Light Infantry Battle Group consists of approximately 1000 soldiers, and its headquarters is based in Camp Abu Naji close to Al Amarah. The battle group consists of a headquarters and logistic company, as well as A, B and Fire Support Companies of the 1st Battalion, The Light Infantry. The Fire Support Company has re-roled into an infantry company. D Company, which is the third infantry company of the battalion, was cross-attached to Queen's Royal Hussars Battle Group in Basrah. In exchange, the 1st Battalion, The Light Infantry Battle Group received B Squadron, Queen's Royal Hussars, which has exchanged its tanks for Land Rovers and operates in the light role.

The 1st Battalion, The Light Infantry, which is also operating mostly in the light role, deployed to Iraq with only half of their Warrior Infantry Fighting Vehicles. In exchange for their Warriors, the troops received Land Rover EPVs (Enhanced Protection Vehicle). Additional assets of the 1st Battalion, The Light Infantry Battle Group are a Joint Helicopter Force asset consisting of two HC.2 Chinook, two Gazelle and two Lynx Mk.7 helicopters, and a reconnaissance asset formed by C Squadron, The 9th/12th Royal Lancers, equipped with Spartan CVR(T)s and Scimitar CVR(T)s.

A Company, 1st Battalion, The Light Infantry Battle Group, which is based in the stadium in the city of Al Amarah, is responsible for the city center and the countryside up to 15km (9.3 miles) north of the city. B Company is based in Al Majar al Kabir and controls the southern part of the battle group AOR. The Fire Support Company of the battalion maintains forward operating base "Condor" on an old Iraqi airfield near the towns of Al Kahla, Qalat Salih and Al Uzayr. B Squadron of Queen's Royal Hussars is based at Ali Ash Sharqi and is responsible for the northern part of the battle group's AOR. C Squadron, The 9th/12th Lancers is based along with the battle group HQ and the helicopter asset in Camp Abu Naji. The major task of the Lancers is to patrol the border region along the Iran-Iraq border.

Area of Responsibility

The 1 LI Battle Group is responsible for the Maysan province, which is situated north of Basrah. The province is the size of Northern Ireland and has a 200km- (124 mile-) long border with Iran on its east side. The bulk of the population in the province, some 30,000 people, lives in Al Amarah. The general situation in the AOR can be called quiet, but there have been several incidents that show that even if an area is quiet there is a potential for trouble.

In June 2003, six British military policemen where killed in Al Majar al Kabir. On 26 December 2003, the Chief of the local police in Al Amarah was killed. This incident occurred during the period when the 1 LI Battle Group took over responsibility in the AOR. In the towns of Ali Ash Sharqi and Al Majar al Kabir, several gunfights between local tribes took place. British patrols were also attacked in some cases.

The main task of the 1 LI Battle Group is to provide a safe and secure environment for the local population. This includes the reconstruction of local security structures, as well as the support for the reconstruction of civil authority. In addition, the battle group is tasked with providing border security, stopping the smuggling of drugs and other goods, as well as securing the oil installations in the AOR.

On Patrol with A Company

"Stop that you little…!" yells a soldier in a Land Rover EPV. Then he dives for cover into the back of the vehicle. Only seconds later, a stone crashes against the side of the Land Rover. We are on patrol with soldiers of A Company, 1st Battalion, The Light Infantry on the outskirts of Al Amarah, and the stones are thrown not during a riot but as part of a dangerous game the local children are playing with the British soldiers. Just minutes earlier, the kids were practicing their newly learned English words when the patrol was standing outside the local Iraqi police station. Some 50 children surrounded the British soldiers. As the vehicles started moving, the kids enjoyed throwing stones at the soldiers, not appreciating the danger.

The patrol is a joint patrol consisting of two Land Rover EPVs, eight British soldiers and three local policemen, as well as a translator. The vehicles are driven by Lance Corporal Grayson and Private Mallvin. Close protection for the patrol is provided by Private Anton, born in St Lucia, and Private Johnson, who stand in the open large hatch in the roof of the rear compartment of the EPV. Leading the patrol is Lieutenant Jones. The other patrol members are Corporal Dryden, Private Batkin and Private Walker.

"We work on a five-day rotation system. Each soldier is doing two days on patrol in the city, one day on duty as Quick Reaction Force, and one day guarding the company base at the stadium," explains Captain Briggs, the 2 IC of A Company. "The fifth day is planned for training, maintenance and rest and recreation," he adds. "The daily routine on patrolling days sees the soldiers going out on two to three patrols, each being three to four hours long," explains Lt. Jones, the patrol leader. The patrols are conducted mounted and dismounted, and a lot are joined by local policemen." Corporal Dryden adds, "Today we are patrolling in 'the Digs,' an area of blocks of flats close to our base from which we received fire several times."

Here troops of the 1st Battalion, The Light Infantry are seen after they have dismounted from their Warrior Infantry Fighting Vehicles. Currently, the infantrymen seldom use their Warriors as the threat level does not require armored vehicles. Usually patrolling is conducted by a combination of armor-protected and soft-topped Land Rovers. The soldier in front is wearing the famous rifle green-colored beret of the Light Infantry adorned with the signal horn badge.

Soon we arrive at the buildings, which are a gray, unpleasant line of five-floor houses. Most of the balconies are covered with satellite dishes and lines of clothing drying from a recent wash. The streets between the buildings are muddy tracks covered with waste, and hundreds of children play in the mixture of mud, human waste and rubbish. The EPVs stop, the doors are kicked open by the soldiers, and then the troops pour out of the vehicles. Within seconds the soldiers have formed a security perimeter around the vehicles. The patrol leader quickly gives some orders and then a four-man patrol, accompanied by two local policemen and a translator, make their way down the road. "The local police do not like to patrol here because they often have trouble," one of the soldiers tells me, "but for us it is OK."

After a couple of minutes, an old man approaches our patrol. He introduces himself as a type of tribe leader and claims to have some authority in the area. During a discussion conducted with the help of the interpreter, Lt. Jones makes it clear to the man that the British troops will no longer tolerate the shooting on their base. "The shooting is part of our wedding celebrations and the people do not mean any harm," the old man explains. "They are shooting in the air. By the way," he says, "we are very happy that you are here because our local market hall is in a very bad state and dirty. We need help to build a new one." The discussion goes on for another twenty minutes. Every time the patrol commander returns to the subject of the shooting, the old man demands that the patrol have a look at the marketplace.

Finally, an agreement is reached: the patrol will look at the marketplace and pass on the request of the people; the old leader will tell his people to stop shooting in the direction of the compound. "The people living here are so-called 'swamp people,'" Corporal Dryden explains while we have a look at the marketplace. "In the past they were living in the swamps, but since Saddam Hussein dried out the region and built channels as obstacles for an Iranian invasion, they have lost their homes and jobs in the swamps. They now live in this shabby place." All the while we talk, at least two of the patrol members scan the surrounding area for signs of an ambush. The British soldiers did not really believe the story about the shooting being part of a celebration. In mid-November, people tried to attack the stadium with an RPG-7. The attackers were discovered early and intercepted so they could not fire their weapon. To the soldiers, this is a clear indication that the firing was more serious.

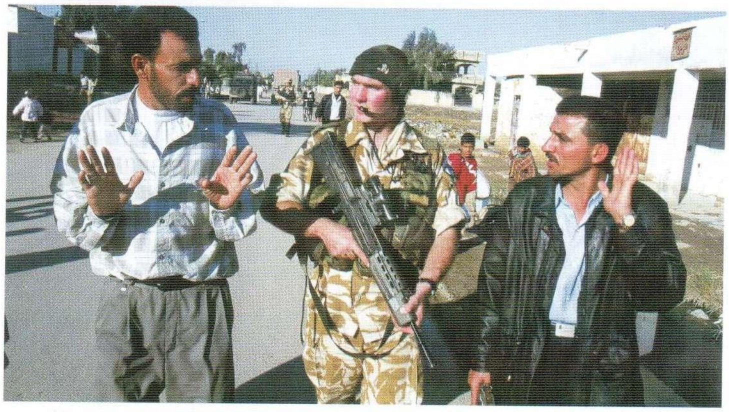
Private Batkin, who belongs to A Company of the 1st Battalion, The Light Infantry, can be seen here patrolling in an area of An Amarah populated by swamp people. His weapon is the SA-80A2 fitted with a Laser Light Module. Note the patch of rifle green cloth attached to his bush hat and the badge of the 20 Armoured Brigade worn on his left sleeve.

But today the patrol can do no more, and we return slowly to the Land Rover EPVs waiting close by. The children who were asking for sweets a minute earlier are now starting to throw stones and mud. "We enjoy the patrolling, especially on foot," says Private Batkin. "It's nice to interact with the locals, and we can see that most of them are peaceful and friendly. Only a minority are against us," he notes. "But their children are a slight problem. There is no control by the parents, and getting a stone in the face can become a serious injury."

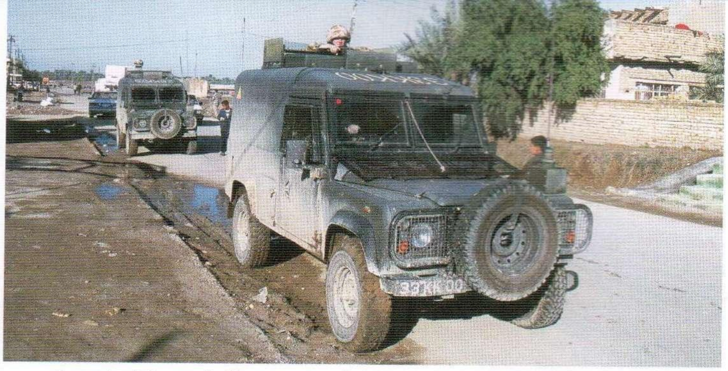
We leave the area where the swamp people live under the usual bombardment of stones and set off to another part of the city. After our patrol returns to the stadium some hours later, Captain Briggs tells me on arrival, "In the last few weeks, our patrols have been attacked by IEDs (Improvised Explosive Devises) three times. Two exploded and the third was found before it could be set off." He continues: "We were very lucky since in both cases only the detonator went off and the main charge failed to explode."

From atop a Land Rover "Snatch," Private Anton provides security for his comrades during a joint patrol in Al Amarah. He is armed with a 5.56mm MINIMI light machine gun. Within the infantry, the 5.56mm MINIMI has replaced the 5.56mm LSW on operations due to the MINIMI's greater firepower and reliability.

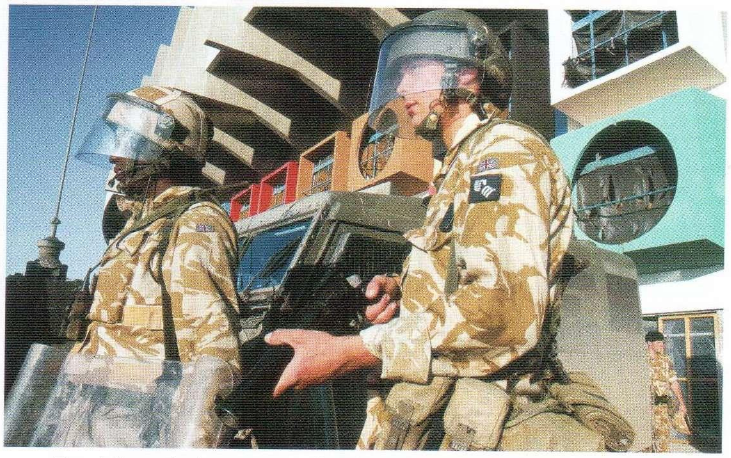
Soldiers of the 1st Battalion, The Light Infantry conduct anti-riot training in early December. In January, the training became required when large-scale riots took place in Al Amarah. The troops wear body armor and Mk.6 Ballistic Helmets fitted with an anti-riot visor.



During a joint patrol, the patrol leader discusses local security matters with a member of the newly formed Iraqi Police. Joint patrols of British soldiers with Iraqi police or troops of the ICDC are a daily routine. Conversation with the Iraqis is made possible with the help of locally contracted translators, one of which can be seen here to the left of Lieutenant Jones of A Company, 1st Battalion, The Light Infantry.



A patrol from A Company, 1st Battalion, The Light Infantry takes to the streets of Al Amarah in early December 2003. While usually equipped with Warrior Infantry Fighting Vehicles for patrolling in Iraq, the troops use the less aggressive-looking armored Land Rovers. The armor protection of the "Snatch" consists of liners that provide protection against small-arms fire.



For riot control purposes, the troops of the 1st Battalion, The Light Infantry are equipped with anti-riot gear. This includes anti-riot visors for the Mk.6 Ballistic Helmet, anti-riot shields, wooden batons, and the baton gun. The British troops have had lengthy experience in riot-control operations from routine deployments to Northern Ireland. Note the 20 Armoured Brigade badge, which shows a gauntlet, worn on the left upper sleeve.

Tribal Feud in Basrah

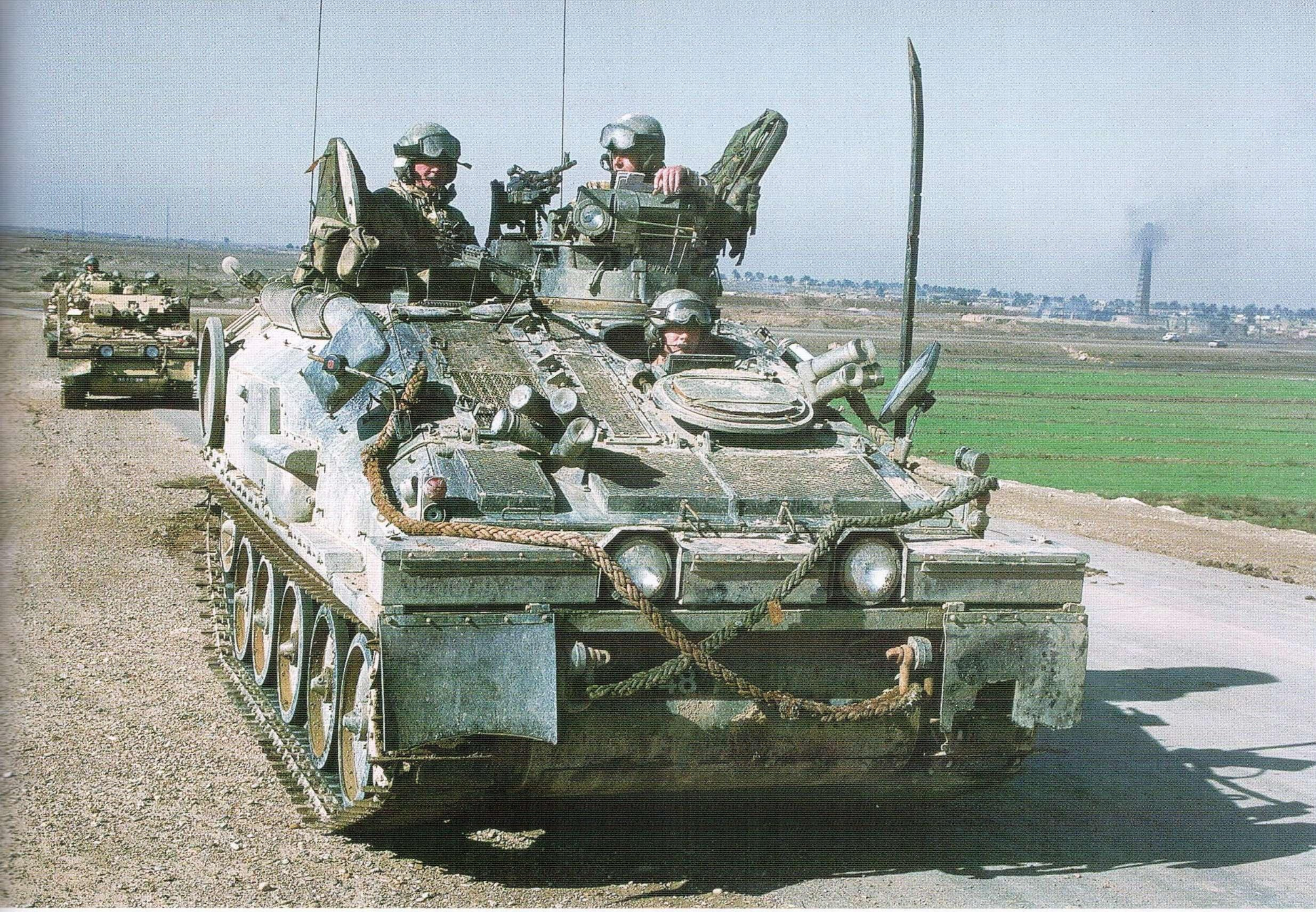
The 1st Battalion, The Light Infantry has cross-attached its D Company under command of Queen's Royal Hussars Battle Group in Basrah. On 17 December, D Company was involved in breaking up a tribal feud between the Al Abtut and Al Hamadne tribes. Prior to the soldiers' intervention, a gun battle involving over 100 tribesmen took place that left 10 tribesmen injured. The battle erupted from a dispute at the local market. The soldiers of D Company, The 1st Battalion, The Light Infantry went in to separate the tribes. One Iraqi was killed by the British troops when he aimed an RPG-7 at a British vehicle. In the end, the commander of D Company helped to negotiate a truce. Unfortunately, the truce lasted only several days before tribesmen clashed again.

After the fighting broke out again, a Warrior IFV from D Company came under attack while on patrol after the vehicle's crew spotted a large group of armed men involved in a gun battle. During the battle, another Warrior IFV of the company was hit in the side by an RPG warhead. The warhead detonated on the vehicle's add-on armor without causing any damage to the vehicle or hurting its crewmembers.

In a related operation, which also involved Challenger 2s of D Squadron, Queen's Royal Hussars, the British forces encircled and dispersed the tribesmen. Twenty-five heavily armed men were arrested during a follow-up operation. In addition to four machine guns, ten AK-47s, an RPG-7 launcher with 25 rounds, and a large amount of ammunition were recovered.

Riots in Al Amarah

On the 11th and 12th of January 2004, Al Amarah became the scene of large-scale riots. The Iraqi protesters, who were demanding jobs, tried to storm the city hall that was guarded by British troops. Soldiers of the 1st Battalion, The Light Infantry drove back most of the protesters with shields and batons, and some were even pushed back by the use of hands. But when the protesters threw grenades at the British troops, they returned fire. When the situation escalated and arms were used, six Iraqis were killed. It is not clear how many of them were killed by the British troops. All elements of the 1 LI Battle Group were involved in putting down the riots.



For the mission in Iraq, the troops of The 9th/12th Royal Lancers regrouped. On operation, a troop consists of a mixture of three Scimitar CVR(T)s and one Spartan CVR(T). The troop is 13 soldiers strong, and seven troops and the command element compose a squadron. Here a Spartan CVR(T) leads a troop on patrol. The troop's Scimitar CVR(T) can be seen in the background.

The 9th/12th Royal Lancers – On Patrol along the Border of Iran

A pale moon illuminates the Iraqi desert during a clear, cold night in early December 2003. The Scimitar CVR(T)s of C Squadron, The 9th/12th Royal Lancers have taken a hull-down position in a wide ditch some one hundred meters away from a number of muddy huts. The other vehicles of the patrol, two more Scimitar CVR(T)s and a Spartan CVR(T), have taken up position close by.

The Scimitar CVR(T)s have their ESPIRE (Enhanced Sight Periscopic Infrared Equipment) Systems switched on and they monitor the movements in the village. The ESPIRE System, with its x8 magnification, even allows the commander and gunner of the British reconnaissance vehicle to see on their screens people moving in the thin-walled buildings. The scenery is quiet, and the British troops can detect no sign of any smuggling activity. But it is only the second night of a seven-day-long patrol and the soldiers are certain that they will see some action in the next days out along the border between Iraq and Iran.

Special Structure for Iraq Deployment

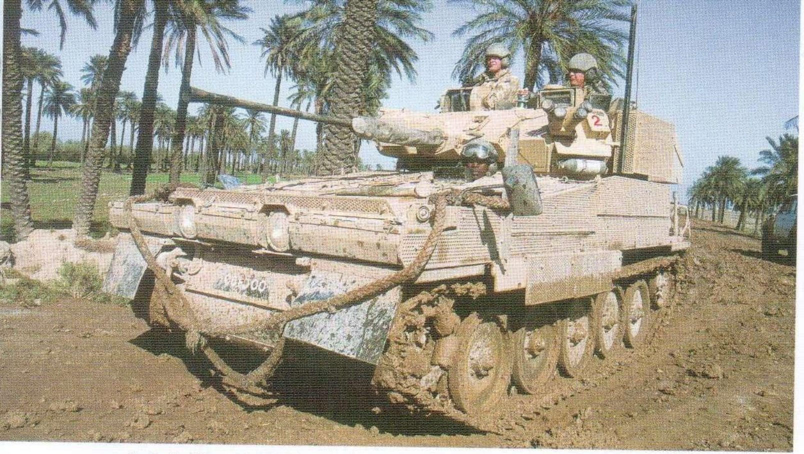
When the troops of The 9th/12th Royal Lancers arrived in Iraq they replaced the Light Dragoons in their role as brigade reconnaissance unit. Deployment for the troops that are usually based in Bergen Hohne in Germany began in early October, and by the middle of the month the soldiers of the regiment had taken over their tasks in Iraq. For most of the soldiers, this was the second time they had traveled to Iraq in 2003 as they had seen action with the 7th Armoured Brigade "Desert Rats" during the initial war in March and April.

The 9th/12th Royal Lancers deployed to Iraq with their HQ Squadron and two reconnaissance squadrons. While the HQ Squadron provides 20 Armoured Brigade with a Brigade Operations Support Team in Basrah, the two reconnaissance squadrons were attached to two of the brigade's battle groups. A squadron was attached in support of 26 Regiment Royal Artillery in the region of the Az Zubayr port, while C Squadron was attached to the 1st Battalion, The Light Infantry in Al Amarah. Each of the two squadrons consists of a Squadron HQ, a logistic support element and seven reconnaissance troops. Each reconnaissance troop is 13 soldiers strong and consists of three Scimitar CVR (T)s and one Spartan CVR(T).

This structure was especially adopted for the Iraq deployment. Usually each of the regiment's three reconnaissance squadrons is divided into one troop with four Spartan CVR(T)s, one troop with four Striker CVR(T)s, and three troops with four Scimitar CVR(T)s each. In Iraq, C Squadron gained control of the reconnaissance platoon of the 1st Battalion, The Light Infantry in order to be able to form seven troops.

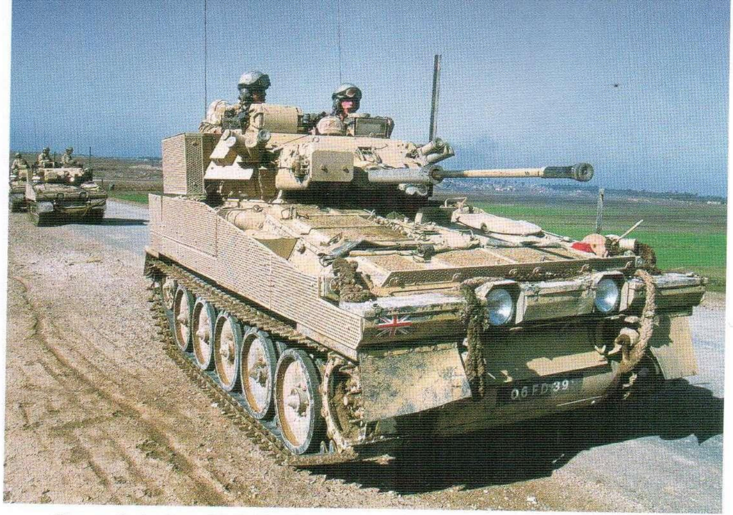
Patroling the Iranian Border

The main tasks of the reconnaissance squadrons in Iraq are road reconnaissance, showing overall presence, conducting area reconnaissance, and setting up and maintaining observation posts. During their patrols along the Iran-Iraq border, the soldiers often support the newly formed units of the Iraqi Border Guard in order to allow them to establish a running system so they can guard the border without additional help. During operations, the reconnaissance patrols of C Squadron usually also visit the two official border-crossing points that are manned by local border guards.



A Scimitar CVR(T) of C Squadron, The 9th/12th Royal Lancers on patrol in the Maysan province of Iraq. During their deployment to Iraq, The 9th/12th Royal Lancers used their capability to conduct formation reconnaissance operations for the first time. In the reconnaissance operations, the troops used the ESPIRE System fitted to their Scimitar CVR(T)s to maximum effect. The Enhanced Sight Periscope Infrared Equipment, which was fitted to the vehicles five years ago, has a x8 magnification. The commander and gunner are able to see the picture on two TV screens. The system works so well that in some cases crews were able to detect the movement of people in houses made of mud and straw.

These Scimitar CVR(T)s were seen during a patrol in the swamp region close to the Iranian border in December 2003. The vehicles belong to C Squadron, The 9th/12th Royal Lancers.



These Scimitar CVR(T)s belong to C Squadron, The 9th/12th Royal Lancers. They are seen in early December 2003 during a patrol southeast of Al Amarah. The picture was taken only 30 kilometers (19 miles) west of the Iran-Iraq border. The hull and turret of the Scimitar CVR(T) is fitted with Ballistic Protection Plates to counter the RPG threat. A mine-blast protection kit is mounted under the vehicle.

The mission of C Squadron, The 9th/12th Royal Lancers is to patrol the battle group's area of responsibility. This includes road reconnaissance, presence patrols, area reconnaissance, and the establishing, maintaining and extraction of covert observation posts.

The border is well guarded on the Iranian side, and many Iranian troops monitor the activities on the other side in Iraq. Iran maintains forts along the border. These forts, which are manned 24 hours a day, are situated two to three kilometers from each other.

In Iraq, The 9th/12th Royal Lancers are using for the first time their capability of formation reconnaissance.

Scimitar CVR(T)s Perform Well

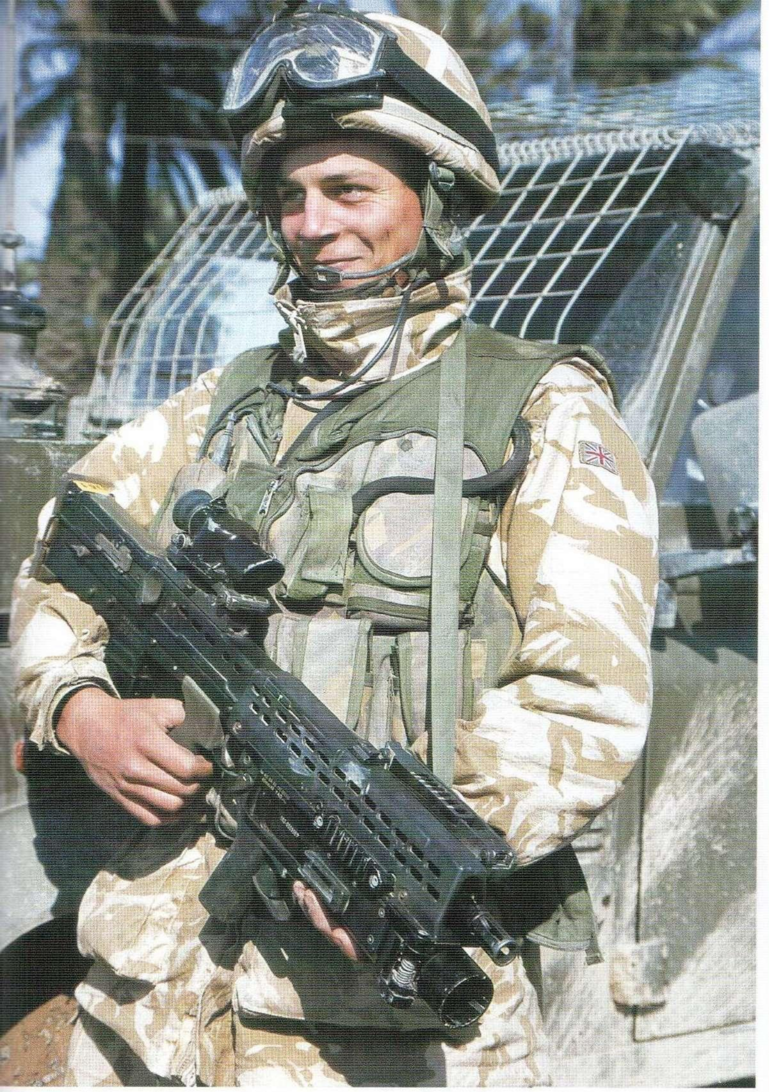
Patrols conducted by The 9th/12th Royal Lancers can last up to seven days. The troops normally load their vehicles with enough supplies for six days, while fuel is re-supplied by the Quartermaster section at previously arranged rendezvous points. During the patrols, the vehicles and crews cover an average distance of 400km (248 miles), and they are known to operate 200km (124 miles) from their base. Despite their age – the first vehicles of the CVR(T) family entered service in the 1970s – the CVR(T)s perform well over these long distances.

The vehicles used by The 9th/12th Royal Lancers in Iraq were all converted to the Cummins diesel engine in 2000. The new engines worked well in the rough terrain of the Iraqi desert. The road wheels of the running gear of the CVR(T)s were worn out in short time, but this was due to the long distances covered. The wear and tear was not heavier than what is incurred during exercises in Germany.

What Else?

For special tasks, the squadrons of The 9th/12th Royal Lancers had FOO (Forward Observation Officer) parties of the 26 Regiment Royal Artillery cross-attached under their command. With their M-STAR target acquisition and surveillance radar, the FOOs added additional reconnaissance capabilities to that of the armored reconnaissance squadrons. During other tasks, The 9th/12th Royal Lancers co-operated with a Phoenix UAV-equipped Royal Artillery battery.

During the first week of November 2003, a vehicle checkpoint manned by C Squadron came under attack by a man who threw a hand grenade at the troops. The hand grenade was not fitted with a detonator so the incident passed by without anyone being injured. In late November 2003, a patrol from C Squadron captured a group of smugglers during a patrol along the border. At the smugglers' base they discovered a large amount of weapons and three stolen police motorbikes. The troops enjoyed riding the motorbikes back to Al Amarah where they were returned to the local police.



This soldier of C Squadron, The 9th/12th Royal Lancers is armed with a 5.56mm SA-80A2, which is fitted with the 40mm AG36 grenade launcher. The AG36 grenade launcher, which is manufactured by the German company Heckler and Koch, was first issued to British troops prior to the outbreak of the war in March 2003.

British Army Units in Iraq in December 2003 "Operation Telic III"

3 Armoured Division

- Headquarters and 3rd Division Signal Regiment
- 14 Signal Regiment (Elements)
- 30 Signal Regiment (Elements)

Under direct command of the Division HQ are:

- 1st Battalion, the Royal Green Jackets
- Joint Helicopter Force of RAF, AAC and Royal Navy assets
- Joint NBC Regiment Reconnaissance Team
- 42 Engineer Regiment (Geographic)

20 Armoured Brigade

- Headquarters and Signal Squadron
- Queen's Royal Hussars (Challenger 2 MBT)
- 1st Battalion, The Light Infantry (Warrior IFV)
- 1st Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Wales (Saxon APC)
- 26 Regiment Royal Artillery (AS-90 SPH)
- 35 Engineer Regiment

In Iraq the brigade is reinforced by elements of the following units:

- 1st Battalion, The Royal Scots
- 2nd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment
- The 9th/12th Royal Lancers (two squadrons and HQ element, Scimitar CVR(T))

National Support Element

- 4 General Support Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps
- 22 Field Hospital
- 33 Engineer Regiment (Explosive Ordnance Disposal) (only elements)
- 1 Regiment, Royal Military Police (only elements)
- 10 Transport Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps (only elements)
- 11 Explosive Ordnance Disposal Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps (only elements)
- 17 Port & Maritime Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps (only elements)
- 23 Pioneer Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps (only elements)
- 24 Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps (only elements)
- 5 General Support Medical Regiment, Royal Army Medical Corps (only elements)

Support for the Ground Forces Royal Navy and Royal Air Force Units

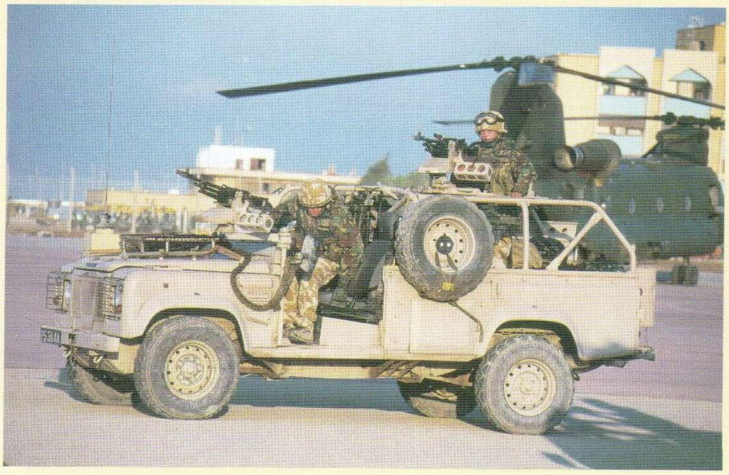
The British troops and the troops of the MND (SE) in Iraq are supported by elements of the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force. The Royal Navy currently has deployed two Type 23 frigates to the Gulf, namely the HMS *Norfolk* and HMS *Kent*. The ships conduct patrolling tasks and prevent smuggling. The RFA *Bayleaf* supports these frigates. Five Sea King Mk. 4 helicopters from 846 Squadron of the Fleet Air Arm of the Royal Navy form part of the Joint Helicopter Force and they provide air transport capability for the army units.

The British air component currently consists of the following Royal Air Force assets:

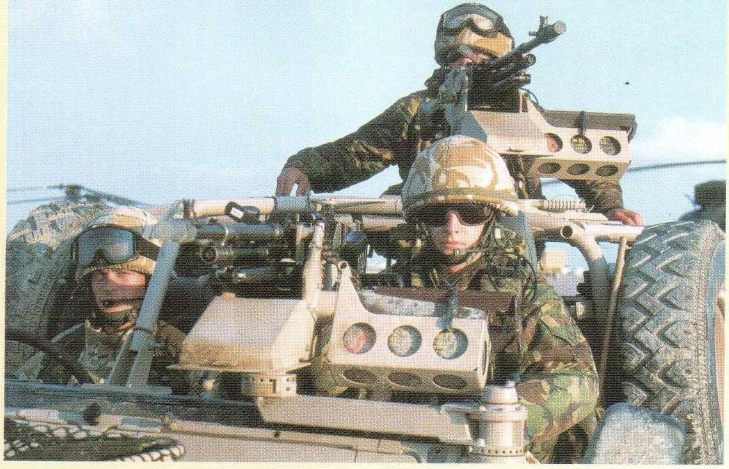
- Tornado GR 4 bomber/reconnaissance aircraft of various squadrons
- VC-10 tanker and transport aircraft from 10 and 101 Squadrons
- Tristar tanker and transport aircraft from 216 Squadron
- C-17 transport aircraft from 99 Squadron
- C-130 Hercules transport aircraft from 24, 30, 47, and 70 Squadrons
- Nimrod maritime patrol aircraft from 120, 201 and 206 Squadrons
- HC-2 Chinook transport helicopters from 7, 18 and 27 Squadrons
- HS-125 transport aircraft from 32 (the Royal) Squadron

RAF personnel of 1 ACC maintain the air traffic control at Basrah International Airport. The soldiers provide air surveillance and air traffic co-ordination by means of a Type 101 deployable radar system. F Squadron, The Royal Air Force Regiment provides security for the airport.

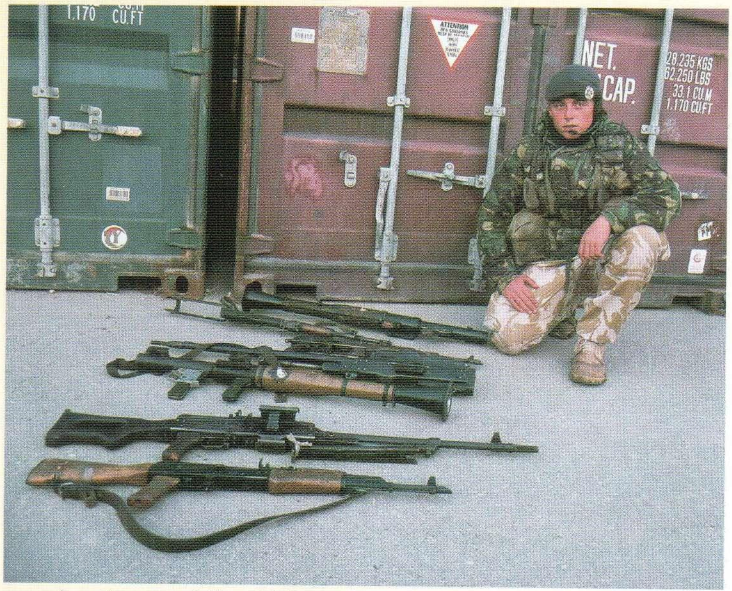
The troops of F Squadron, The Royal Air Force Regiment use a number of Quads for quick deployment around the Basrah International Airport perimeter. Like the Land Rover Defender XD WMIK, the Quads have a good cross-country capability. Due to their low profile, the vehicles are perfect for the deployment of sniper teams or cut-off teams.



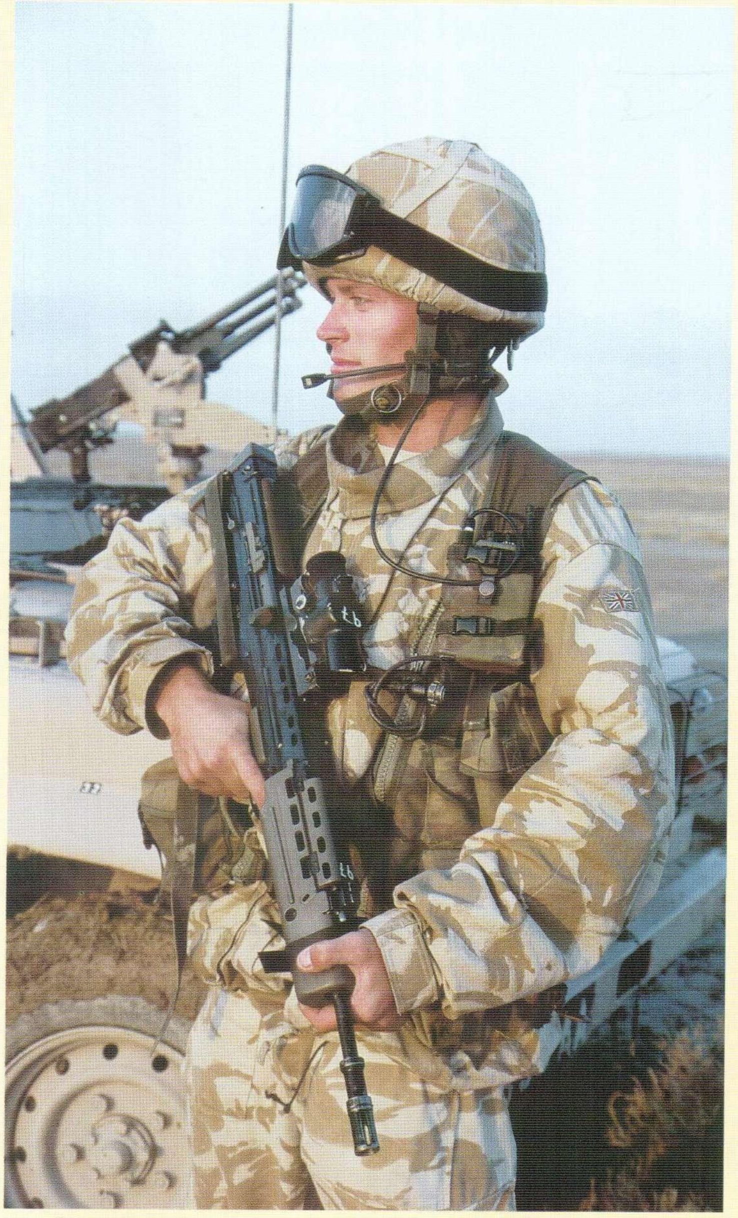
The Land Rover Defender XD WMIK is used by 34 Squadron, The Royal Air Force Regiment for patrolling at the Basrah International Airport and in the surrounding countryside. The vehicles are armed with two 7.62mm GPMG machine guns and carry other weapons like the 60mm L9A1 light mortar. The vehicle's crew consists of three to four airmen, and two vehicles usually form a patrol.



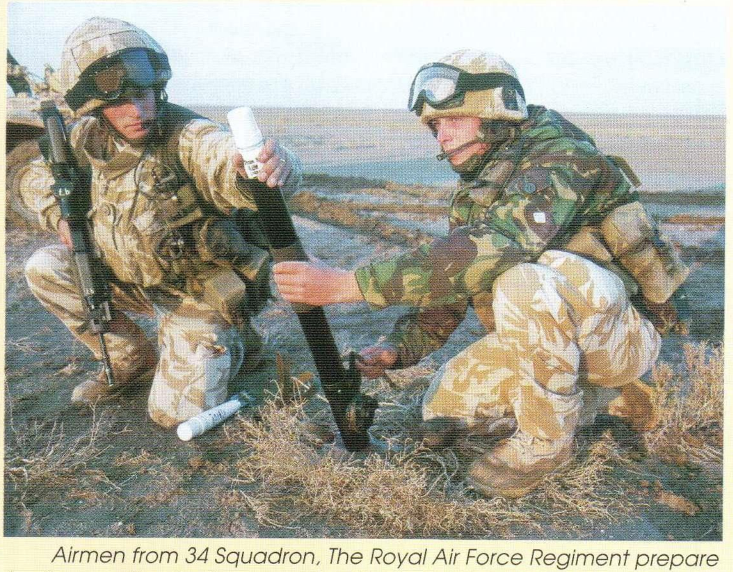
This picture shows a Land Rover Defender XD WMIK crew of 34 Squadron, The Royal Air Force Regiment on patrol. The crew consists of two machine gunners and the driver. Note the mix of desert DPM and temperate DPM worn by the troops.



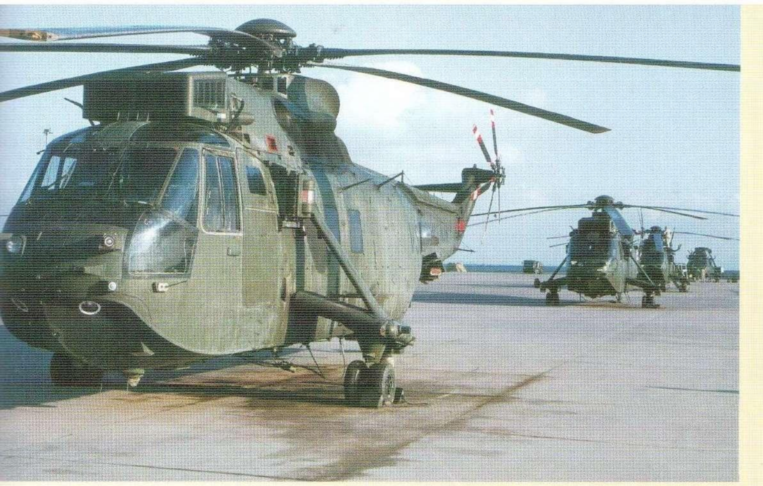
An airman of the 34 Squadron, The Royal Air Force Regiment poses in early December with a selection of confiscated weapons. The weapons were taken from Iraqis checked during routine patrols in the outer perimeter of the Basrah International Airport. The collection includes two RPG-7 anti-tank weapon launcher, some 7.62mm AK-47 assault rifles and a 7.62mm PKM machine gun.



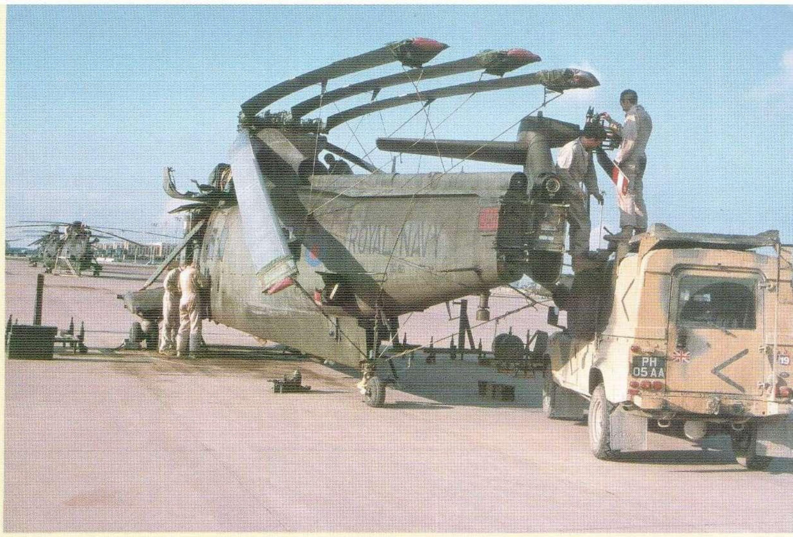
For communication on the flight level, the troops of The Royal Air Force Regiment are equipped with the Personnel Role Radio, which this airman of F Squadron is using. The soldier is armed with a 5.56mm SA-80A2 assault rifle and wears PLCE webbing in DPM camouflage.



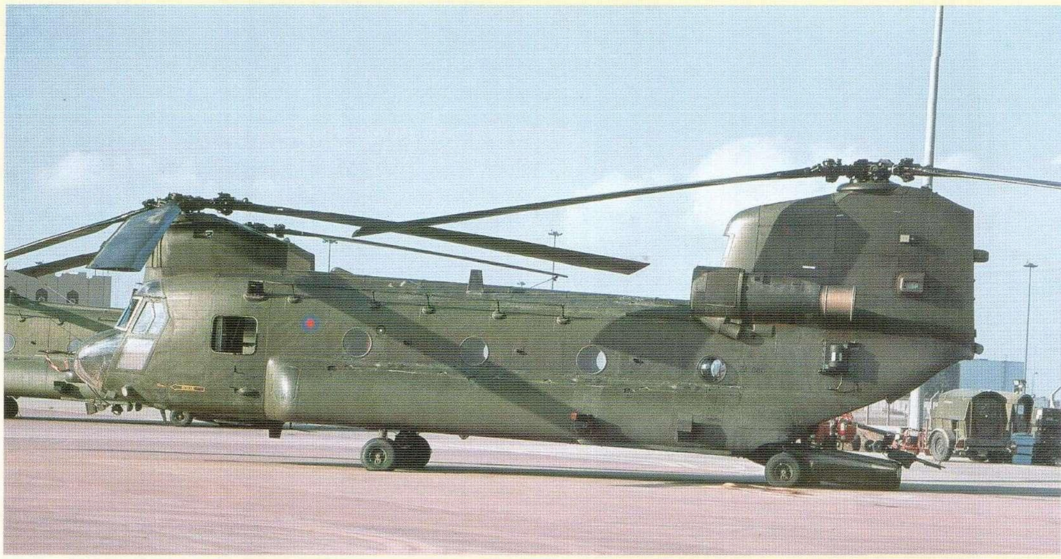
Airmen from 34 Squadron, The Royal Air Force Regiment prepare to fire an illumination round with their 51mm L9A1 light mortar. Together with four 81mm L16A2 mortars of the maneuver support flight, the weapon provides the squadron with its own indirect fire capability.



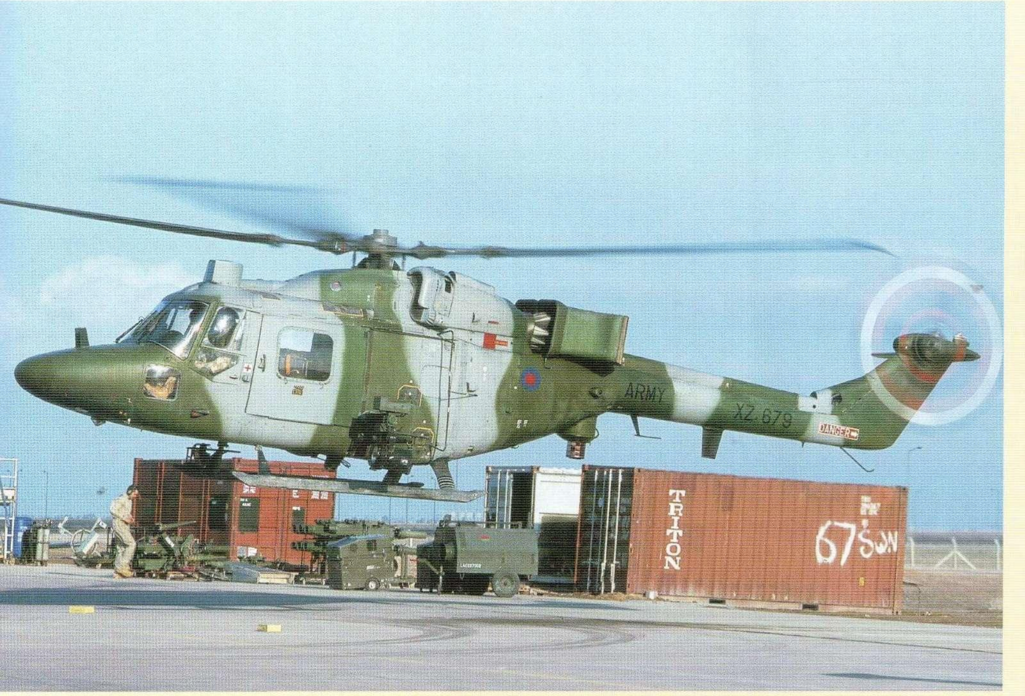
At the time of writing, five Sea King HC Mk.4 helicopters were based at Basrah International Airport in support of the MND (SE). In the future, these helicopters of 846 Naval Air Squadron of the Fleet Air Arm of the Royal Navy will be replaced by Puma Transport helicopters of the Support Helicopter Force of the Royal Air Force.



The Sea King has a combat range of 644 km (400 miles) and can carry up to 27 troops. The helicopter is also able to transport underslung loads such as Land Rovers or 105mm Light Guns.

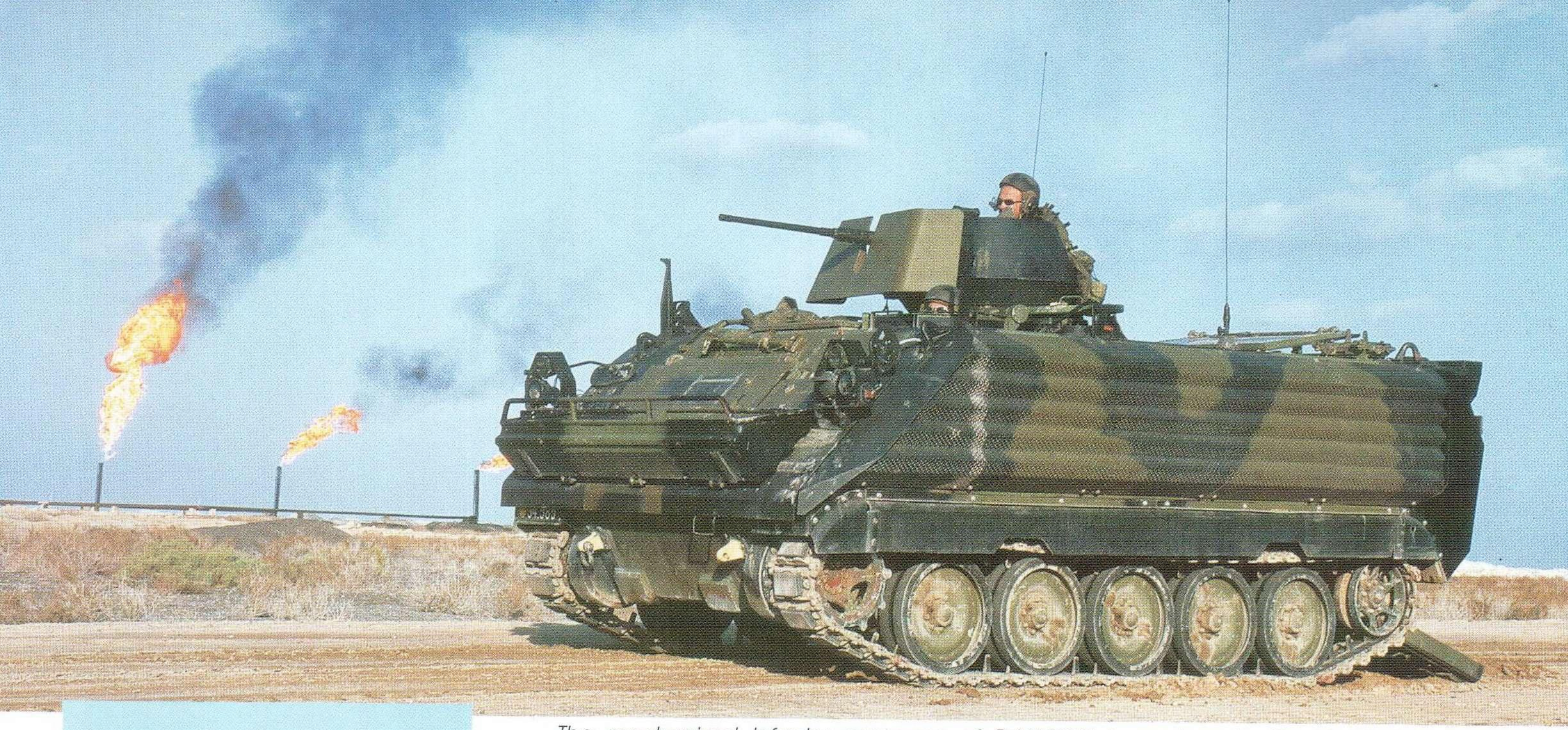


The Multinational Division (South East) has several helicopter assets under its command. The Dutch battalion is supported by some CH-47Ds of the Tactical Helicopter Group of the Dutch Air Force. The Italian brigade enjoys the support of three HH3-F helicopters of the Air Force. The British Armed Forces deployed five HC.2 Chinooks of 7, 18 and 27 Squadrons of the Royal Air Force, five Sea King Mk.4s of 846 Naval Air Squadron Fleet Air Arm of the Navy, and seven Lynx Mk.7s and four Gazelles of the Army Air Corps under command of the MND (SE). This HC.2 of 27 Squadron Royal Air Force was photographed at the Basrah International Airport.

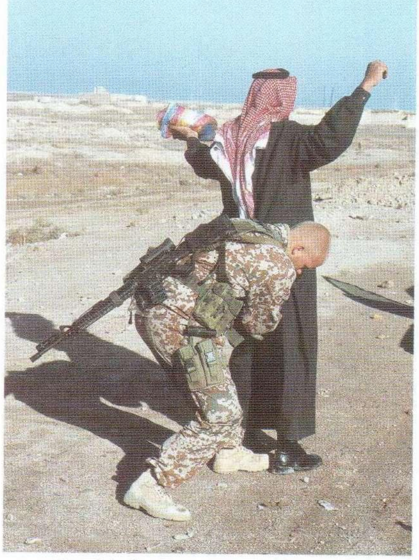


A Lynx Mk.7 anti-tank helicopter of the Army Air Corps takes off from Basrah International Airport. The helicopter is fitted with a search light on its left side. The Lynx Mk.7 can be armed with a total of eight TOW anti-tank missiles. It is possible to mount 7.62mm GPMG machine guns in its doors. When not armed, the Lynx Mk7 can be used to transport up to six troops.

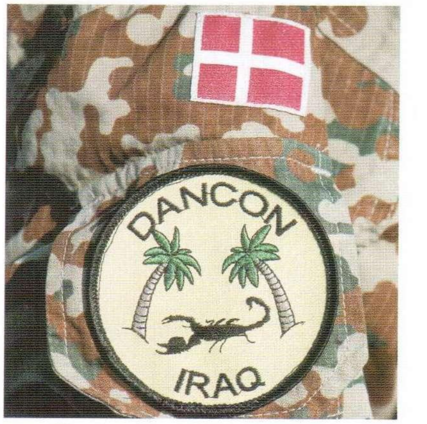
A pilot from 659 Squadron of the Army Air Corps boards his Lynx Mk.7 helicopter. Note the 16 Air Assault Brigade badge he wears on his upper left sleeve.



The mechanized infantry company of DANCON is equipped with 14 M113G3 armored personnel carrier. The vehicle is armed with a 12.7mm M2 HB heavy machine gun and fitted with passive add-on armor, which offers the crew protection against small arms fire. The M113G3 is the latest version of the M113 APC used by the Danish Army. It was upgraded with an MTU 6-cylinder powerpack and a ZF LSG gear box. Here one of the M113G3s can be seen on patrol in one of the three oil fields located in the DANCON AOR.



Danish troops search the driver of a car while their patrol runs a temporary vehicle checkpoint along with soldiers of the ICDC. Due to the relatively low risk of an enemy attack, Danish troops seldom wear their combat helmets. This soldier is armed with the 5.56mm Diemaco C7A1 assault rifle.



The badge of DANCON shows a scorpion and two palm trees, as well as the word "DANCON."

DANCON – Danish and Lithuanian Troops in Iraq

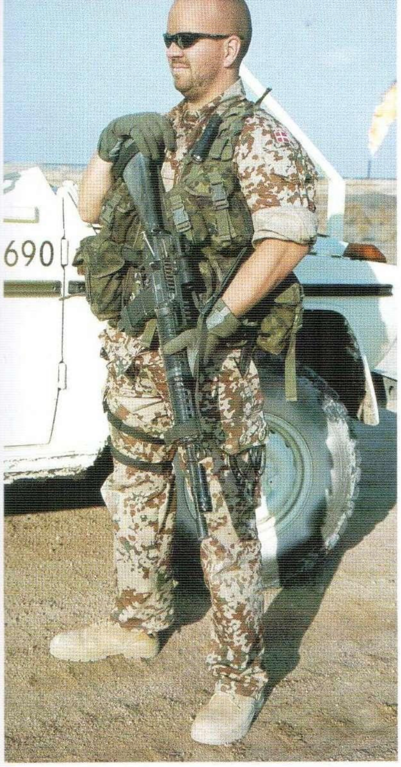
It was a day in early November 2003 when a Lithuanian patrol left Camp "Eden" near Al Qurna and headed north to the region of the "Glory Channel." The patrol's task was to investigate a reported murder somewhere in the dried-out swamp region north of Al Qurna. However, the patrol never reached its destination. At a crossroads, the vehicles of the patrol came under fire from three sides. With no way out, the Lithuanian troops performed their anti-ambush drills as best as possible and engaged the enemy. While the battle was in progress, the patrol commander called the Ops Room and asked for reinforcements. It was not long before the DANCON Quick Reaction Force arrived on the scene. Sometime later they were backed up by troops and MOWAG Eagles of the Danish reconnaissance company and M113G3s of DANCON's mechanized infantry company.

With nearly the whole Danish-led battalion now involved, during the ensuing battle the troops stormed the houses from which they were fired upon. During this phase of the fighting the troops used tear gas to minimize casualties. When everything was over, the Danish and Lithuanian troops had taken 12 prisoners and seized a significant number of weapons and explosives. Amazingly, nobody was killed in the battle. However, the enemy troops were not Saddam supporters but members of local tribes of swamp people, which were fighting each other when the Lithuanian patrol arrived at the crossroads.

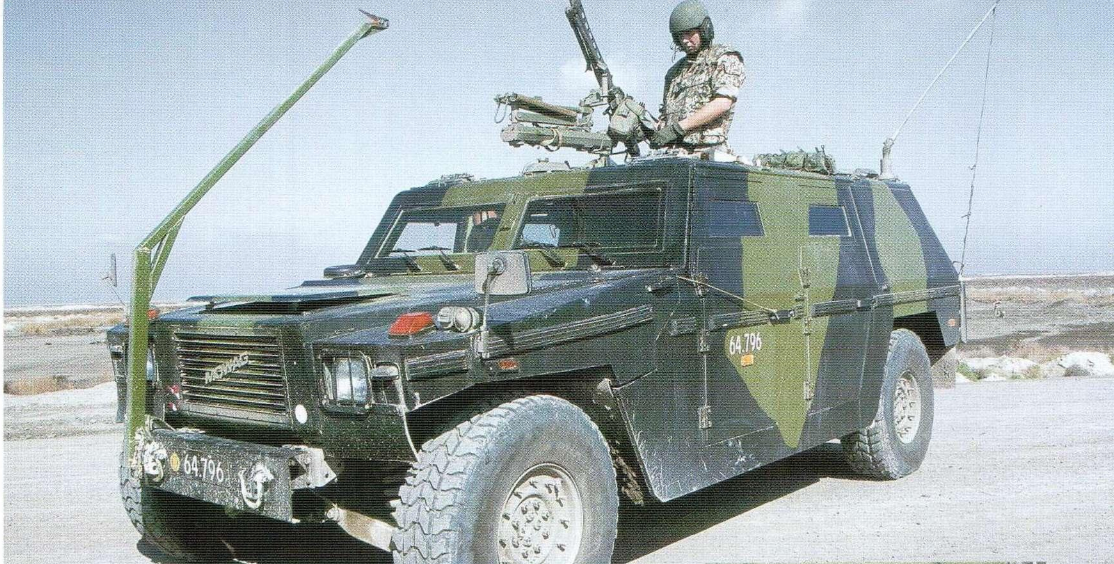
Major Incidents and DANCON's AOR

The incident just described is typical of the situation in the area of responsibility (AOR) of the Danish contingent (DANCON). In DANCON's AOR, most of the trouble is related to rival tribes fighting each other rather than to Saddam supporters targeting Coalition forces. The swamp people used to live in the large swamps along the Tigris River. During the Iran-Iraq war that lasted from 1980 to 1988, Saddam Hussein built a couple of channels as water obstacles in order to stop a possible Iranian invasion. They caused the swamps to dry out, and the swamp people lost their livelihood. Soon the swamp people started to earn their income from other work like robbery or smuggling. Having something of the gun culture that exists today, different tribes of swamp people fought each other to gain control of disputed territory. The Danish troops made enemies of some of these tribes when they searched houses of tribe members and confiscated large numbers of weapons. In addition, the confiscation of 70kg (154 lb.) of cannabis smuggled over the Iranian border added to the hostilities.

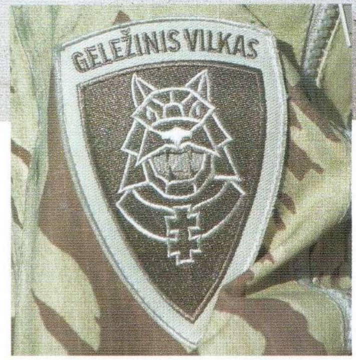
But the swamp people are not the only troublemakers. After the arrest of a local Shi'ite leader who was on Saddam's payroll, the CIMIC building in Al Qurna was attacked in August. Some seven RPG rounds were fired at the building. Luckily, most of the rounds caused little damage and nobody was badly injured. In a sad incident, the only Danish soldier killed so far lost his life to friendly fire. The incident occurred when a night patrol maintained a vehicle checkpoint. When the troops checked a truck, one soldier climbed onto the back of the vehicle in order to check its load. After finishing this job, he jumped down back onto the road. In the dark, one of his comrades mistook him for an attacker and shot him. The bullet hit the soldier in the head and he was killed on the spot.



The Danish infantry soldiers operating in Iraq use the 5.56mm Diemaco C7A1 assault rifle as their standard weapon. The weapon carried by the soldier seen here is fitted with an Aimpoint reflex sight and a Sure-Fire light. The soldier is wearing the Danish desert pattern combat uniform and a load bearing vest in the standard Western Europe camouflage of different greens and black.



Some 22 MOWAG "Eagle I" reconnaissance vehicles are used by DANCON's reconnaissance company. It is interesting to note that the vehicles were converted to patrol vehicles by removing the turret of the vehicle that housed sophisticated sensor equipment. To maintain some firepower, a 7.62mm MG3 is pintle-mounted on the roof of the Danish MOWAG "Eagle I."



The badge of the Lithuanian infantry battalion named "Gelezinis Vilkas," to which the 50 soldiers serving in Iraq belong.

DANCON's AOR consists of some 3600 square kilometers (2236 square miles), which is about the size of the Danish island of Fünen. The population of approximately 42,000 people living in the AOR is nearly 100% Shi'ite. Three important oil fields are situated in the AOR. The protection of these oil fields, as well as the protection of water pump stations and securing the main road between Basrah and Al Kut, are the main focus of the Danish troops.

The DANCON is based at Camp "Eden" just outside of Al Qurna. Al Qurna is a city some 70 kilometers (44 miles) north of Basrah. The DANCON battalion-size formation is one the five battle groups under command of the British 20 Armoured Brigade, which is headquartered in Basrah.

DANCON's Structure and Equipment

When the Danish troops arrived in Iraq on 2 June 2003, they were the first troops from a country that did not fight alongside US and British troops in the initial war. While the first Danish contingent stayed in Iraq for only five months and was replaced on 12 October 2003, the second and following contingents will do six-month tours. Drawn together from troops from the Danish International Brigade, DANCON is based at Camp "Eden" outside of Al Qurna.

The Danish contingent (DANCON) consists of 460 Danish troops and a Lithuanian infantry platoon numbering 50 troops. The battalion is structured into a HQ and Support Company, a reconnaissance company, and a mechanized infantry company. The HQ and Support Company consists of the battalion headquarters, a logistic platoon, an EOD section, an engineer platoon, a 23-soldier military police platoon, a medical platoon with Patria XA-180 wheeled armored ambulances, and a signal detachment. Most of the troops of the HQ and Support Company belong to the "Princess Life Regiment."

The reconnaissance company consists of a company HQ element and three reconnaissance platoons. Each of these platoons is equipped with seven MOWAG Eagle I reconnaissance vehicles. Just recently the Danish Army removed the machine gun-armed sensor turret from these vehicles in order to decrease the weight of the vehicle. The MOWAG Eagle I is now more of a patrol vehicle providing armored protection for its crew rather than a reconnaissance vehicle. A hatch is situated on the roof of the vehicle, and a 7.62mm MG-3 machine gun is pintle mounted there. The reconnaissance company is provided by the Guard Hussars Regiment.

The mechanized infantry company consists of a company HQ, three Danish mechanized infantry platoons and one Lithuanian mechanized infantry platoon. Each of the mechanized infantry platoons is equipped with three M113G3 armored personnel carriers, and another two are situated within the company HQ. In addition to the APC, each platoon is equipped with six Mercedes GD cross-country vehicles. The platoons consist of three sections of 10 soldiers each. During operations, they usually deploy either in their

Seen on patrol in one of the oil fields close to Al Qurna, this Danish infantryman belongs to the crew of an M113G3 and has just dismounted for a routine stop. While the situation in the Danish AOR is basically quiet, the major challenge for the troops from the islands in the Baltic Sea are the tribes of swamp people who have a gun culture and often fight other tribes.

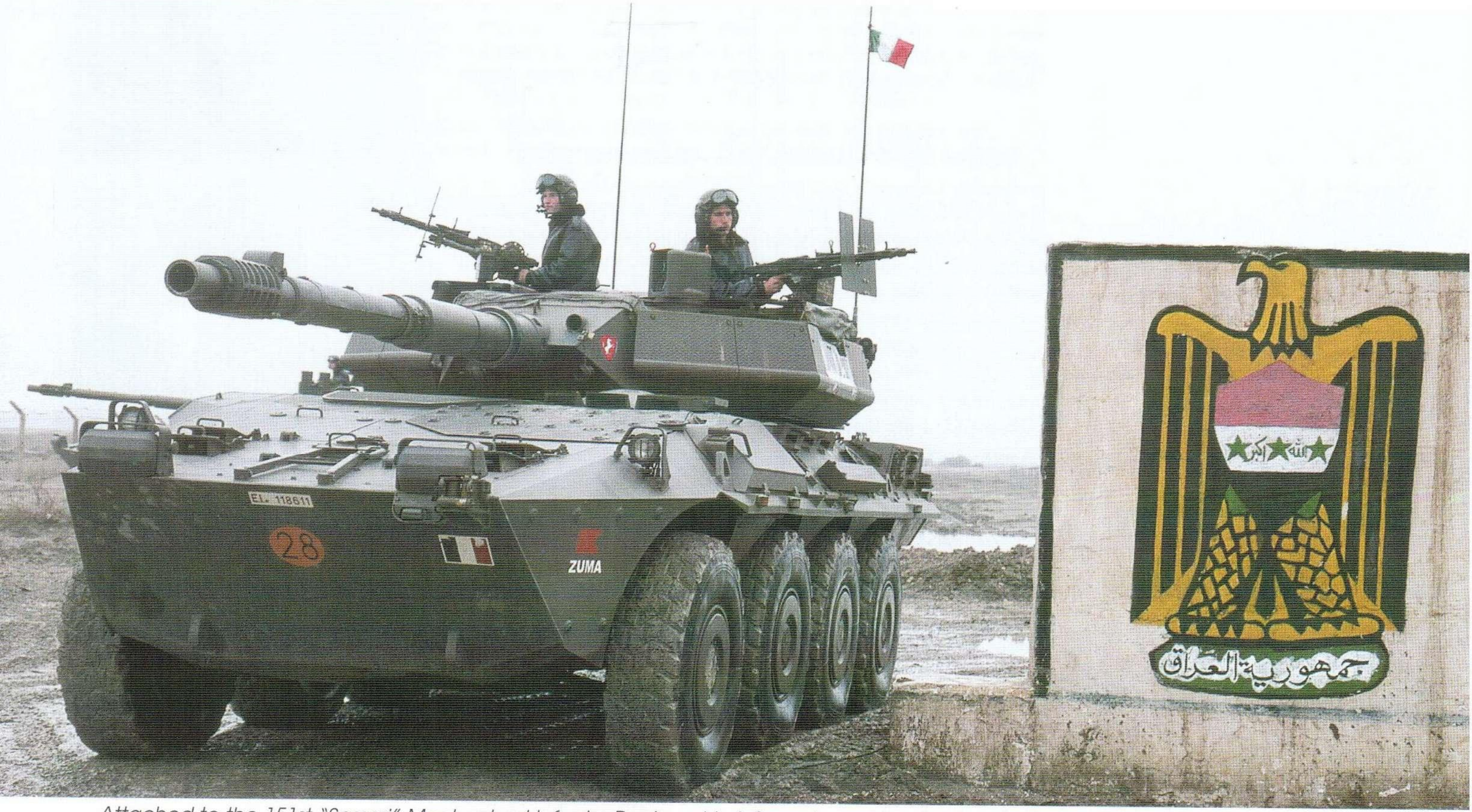
Here Lithuanian troops armed with 5.56mm M16A1 assault rifles can be seen after having dismounted from their M113G3 armored personnel carrier during a patrol in the dried swamps. The Lithuanian troops use Danish vehicles in order to make maintenance and supply easier within DANCON. Prior to their deployment to Iraq, the Lithuanian troops went to Denmark for a training package.

M113G3 APCs or with two Mercedes GD cross-country vehicles. The weaponry of the infantry consists of the 5.56mm Diemaco C7 assault rifle, the 5.56mm Diemaco C8 carbine, the 7.62mm MG3 machine gun, and the 84mm Carl Gustav anti-tank weapon. Each M113G3 is armed with a 12.7mm M2 HB heavy machine gun.

Lithuanian Platoon

Under command of the mechanized infantry company of DANCON is a 50-soldier platoon from Lithuania. The troops of the Baltic state conducted pre-deployment training with the Danish troops in Denmark before they deployed to Iraq. The platoon is totally integrated into the Danish mechanized company and uses mainly Danish equipment. This includes three M113G3 APCs and Mercedes GD cross-country vehicles. The Lithuanian troops are armed with 5.56mm M16A1 assault rifle, which the US government supplied to the country. (When I met the Lithuanian troops they were just doing some target practise with their weapons.) In addition to their M16s, the troops also fired some of the weapons they confiscated. This is a very cheap way of live firing since the ammunition was also taken from former Iraqi stocks.

While Lithuania has a 12-month conscription period, the soldiers deployed to Iraq are all professionals. After Lithuania had troops deployed to Bosnia with SFOR and Kosovo with KFOR, Iraq is another opportunity for the troops to show their ability to operate alongside their Western allies. In 2004, Lithuania will become a member of NATO and then it is most likely that Lithuanian troops will be involved in even more international deployments.



Attached to the 151st "Sassari" Mechanized Infantry Regiment is A Squadron of the 3rd Savoia Cavalry Regiment, which is equipped with ten Centauro B1 wheeled armored reconnaissance vehicles. One of these vehicles can be seen here ready to go on a night patrol. Usually the Centauros are used for convoy escort operations and night patrols during which they can use their thermal imaging equipment to great advantage.

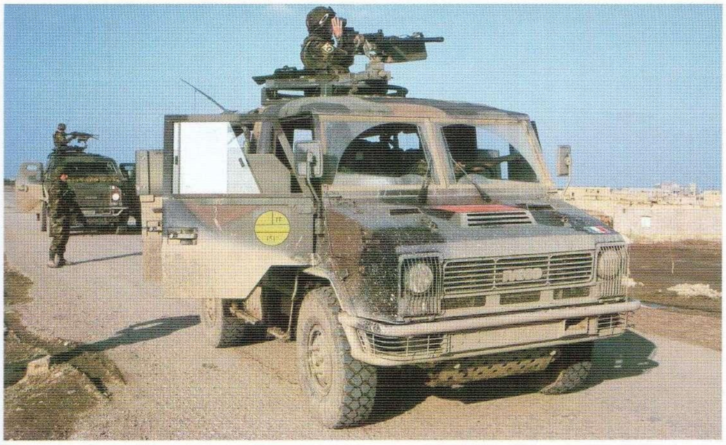
"Sassari" Brigade – Italian Joint Task Force in Iraq

In addition to the 20 Armoured Brigade, the "Sassari" Brigade of the Italian Army provides the combat power of the MND (SE). The Italian forces under British command, which number some 3000 troops, make up the biggest national contingent in the division after the British element. Based in Nasiriyah (An Nasiriyah), the Italian Joint Task Force controls the northwestern part of the AOR of the MND (SE).

Background of the Italian Deployment

Prior to the 2003 Gulf War, the Italian Government strongly supported the US and British policy. However, no Italian troops were involved in the war. On 14 May 2003, the Italian Government established an emergency operative plan for operations in Iraq as a peacekeeping and humanitarian mission. When on 22 May 2003 the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1483 calling for the international community to contribute to Iraq's security and stabilization in order to create the most propitious circumstances for the development of the Iraqi State, the Italian forces were ready.

The deployment of the first Italian contingent began in the middle of



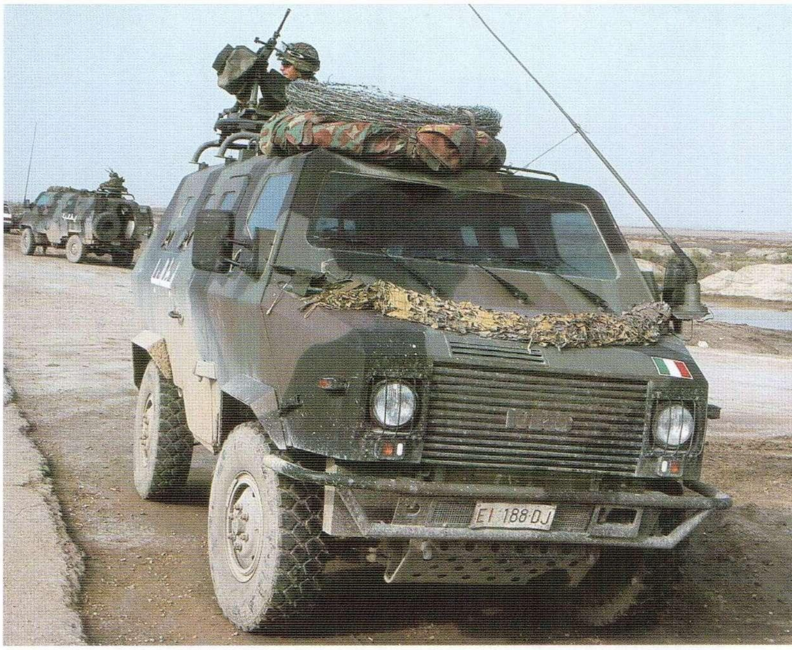
After the patrol from the 1st Section, 1st Platoon, 1st "Cobra" Company of the 151st "Sassari" Mechanized Infantry Regiment heard gunfire from the nearby houses of Nasiriyah, a machine gunner on top of a VM-90T uses binoculars to find the origin of the shooting. Later it was discovered that the fire was part of a wedding celebration.

June. This contingent consisted of the "Garibaldi" *Bersaglieri* Brigade. On 8 October 2003, the "Sassari" Brigade replaced the "Garibaldi" *Bersaglieri* Brigade and they will stay in Iraq for six months before the next Italian contingent takes over.

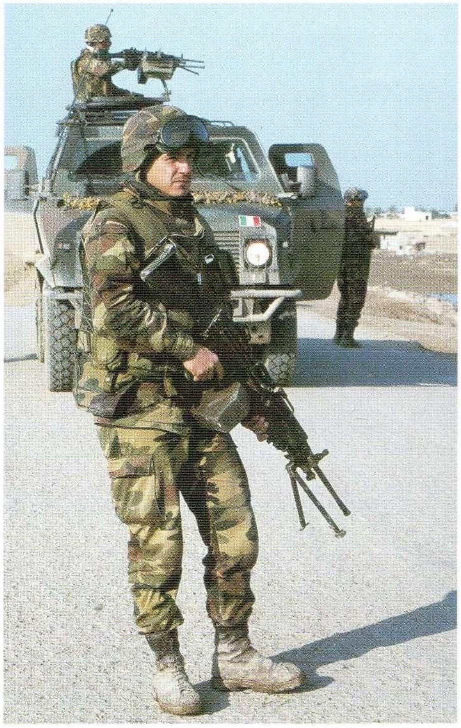
AOR of the "Sassari" Brigade

The area of responsibility assigned to the Italian Joint Task Force is the Dhi Qar province in southern Iraq, an area that is over 12,000 square kilometers (7452 square miles) in size. It stretches 200 km (124 miles) from west to east and 140 km (87 miles) from north to south. Three large cities are situated in the AOR, namely Ash Shatra, Suq As Shuyukuh and Nasiriyah. Some 530,000 Iraqis live in Nasiriyah, the capital of the Dhi Qar province, while the total population of the province is 1,500,000.

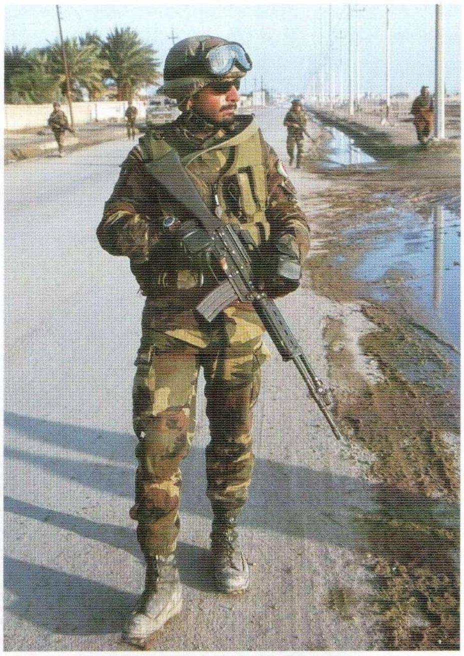
For tactical reasons the "Sassari" Brigade has cut its AOR into two areas. The northern area, called "AOR Alpha," is controlled by Task Force "Dimonios" while the southern AOR, called "AOR Bravo," is monitored by Task Force "Samus." The brigade's mission is to maintain a safe, secure environment and freedom of movement within its AOR. This includes providing security for two main coalition supply roads, three major oil pipelines and some power lines running through the AOR. In addition, the "Sassari" Brigade has to train units of the newly formed Iraqi Civil Defence Corps and the Iraqi Police, support and protect the local



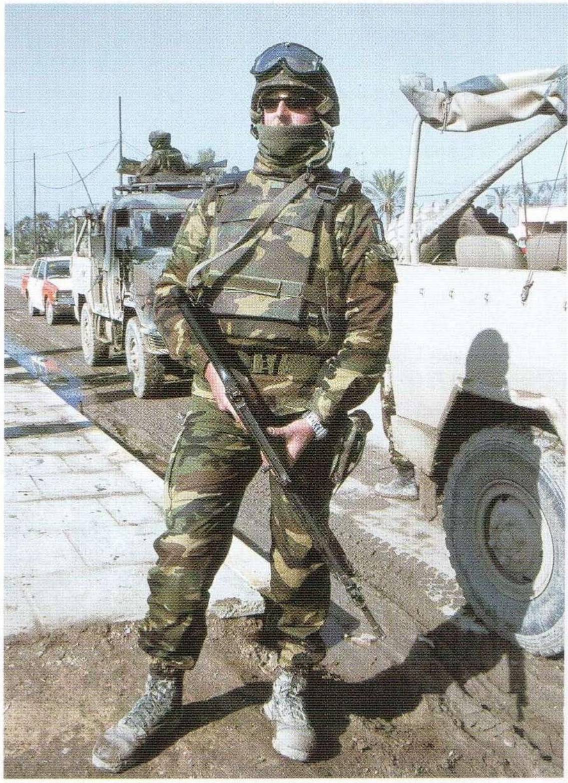
The Italian troops conduct routine patrols in IVECO 40.10 WM 4x4 VM-90T light trucks or the armor-protected version of the vehicle, the Boneschi MAV 5 VM-90P light armored vehicle. Inside the Boneschi MAV 5 VM-90P there is room for up to six soldiers. The vehicle provides protection for the crew against small arms fire. Nine firing ports located along the sides, in the front, and in the rear of the vehicle allow the crew to fire their weapons from inside the vehicle. A large hatch situated in the roof is fitted with a ring mount for various weapons like the 5.56mm MINIMI.



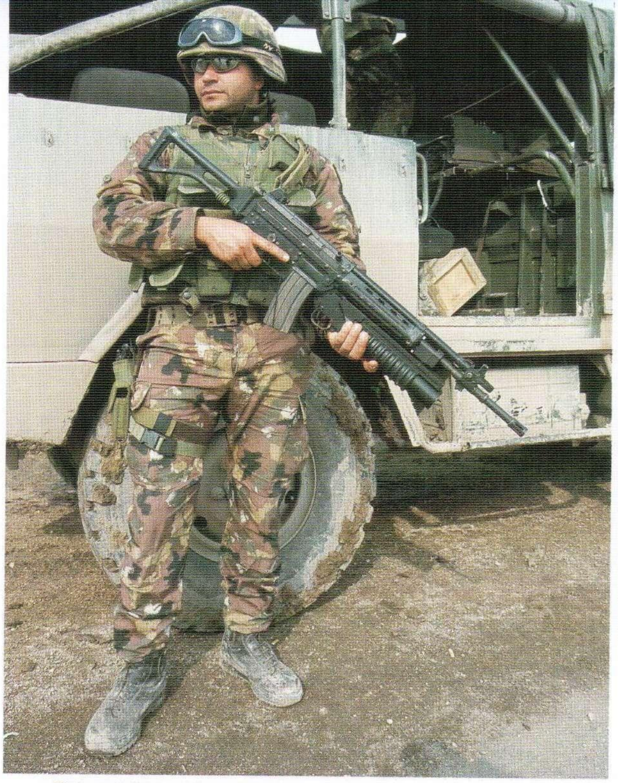
Responding to the sound of gunfire during a patrol, troops of the 151st "Sassari" Mechanized Infantry Regiment have dismounted from their vehicles. The troops scan the area in order to locate the origin of the firing. The soldier in front is armed with a 5.56mm MINIMI light machine gun.



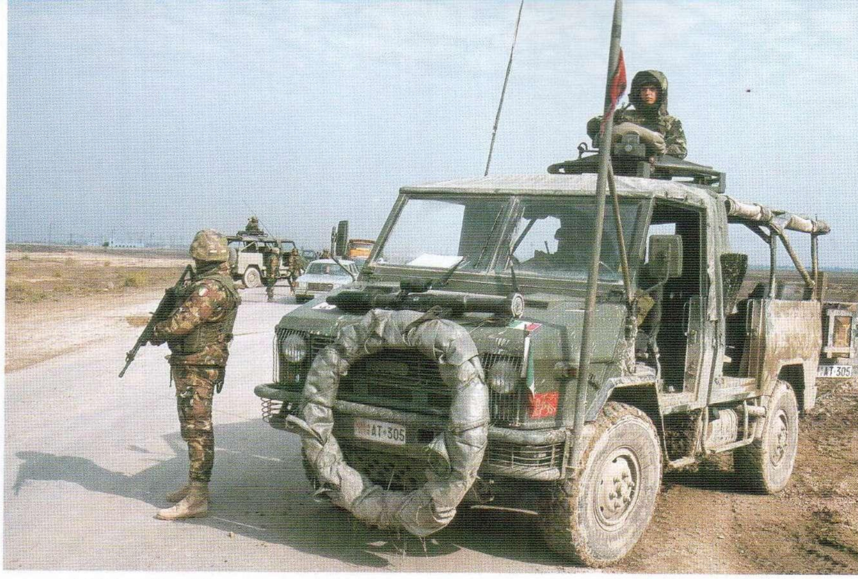
The dismounted troops are closely followed by their trucks during a foot patrol. In the event of an ambush, the machine guns mounted on the trucks can be used to back up the small arms of the infantry. The leading soldier of this patrol from the 1st Section, 1st Platoon, 1st "Cobra" Company of the 151st "Sassari" Mechanized Infantry Regiment is armed with a 5.56mm Beretta AR 70/90 assault rifle.



This infantryman of the 151st "Sassari" Mechanized Infantry Regiment has dismounted from a IVECO 40.10 WM 4x4 VM-90T light truck during a patrol in Nasiriyah. He is armed with the 5.56mm Beretta 70/90 assault rifle.



This soldier of the rifle company from the "San Marco" Marines Regiment is armed with a 5.56mm Beretta AR 70/90 assault rifle fitted with a 40mm M203PI grenade launcher. Note the special camouflage pattern of the uniform, which is only used among the "San Marco" Marines in the Italian Armed Forces.



A VCP of the "San Marco" Marines outside of Nasiriyah. Note the Panzerfaust 3 anti-tank weapon on the bonnet of the IVECO 40.10 WM 4x4 VM -90T light truck. In order to provide the vehicle crews with additional protection against small arms fire, the vehicles were fitted with armored plates around the rear troop compartment.

establishments of the Coalition Provisional Authority, support the rebuilding of important civilian infrastructure, and conduct CIMIC operations.

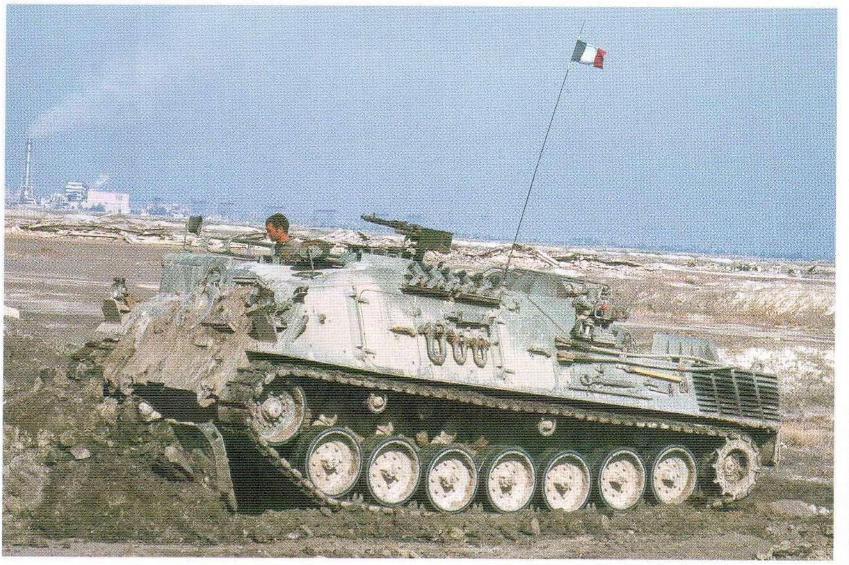
Structure of the Italian Joint Task Force

The Italian Joint Task Force consists of troops from all branches of the Italian armed forces. The bulk of 1850 soldiers are drawn from the army while another 500 come from the Navy. The Italian Air Force deployed 200 soldiers to Iraq and the *Carabinieri* attached 350 military policemen under command of the "Sassari" Brigade. In detail, the Italian Joint Task Force consists of the following elements:

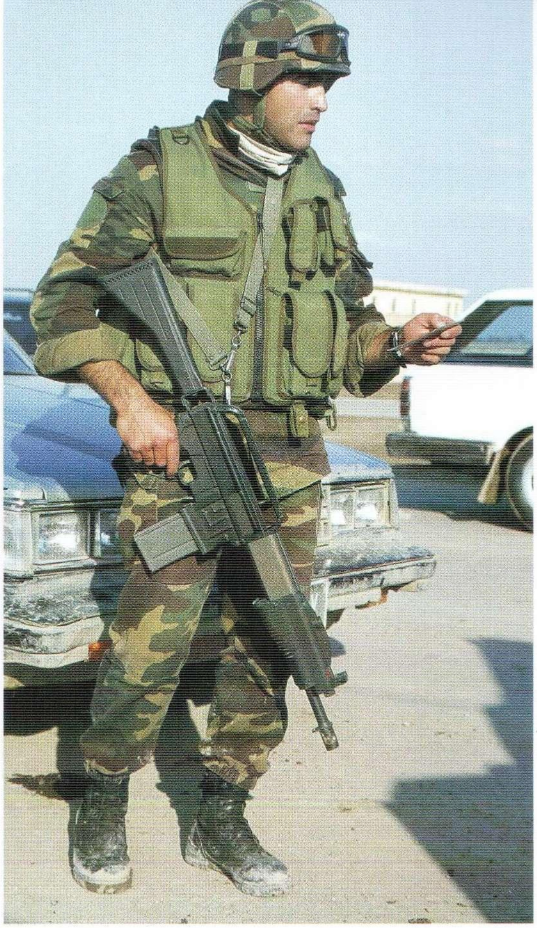
- The Joint Task Force Headquarters based at the headquarters of the "Sassari" infantry brigade and incorporating cells from the other services. Subordinated directly under the Joint Task Force Headquarters is Task Force "Livenza," a CIMIC battalion. The units are based in Camp "White Horse."
- Task Force "Dimonios" is one of two combat elements of the Italian Joint Task Force and the only Italian combat element of the Italian forces in Iraq. The unit is based on the 151st "Sassari" Mechanized Infantry Regiment, from which two infantry companies, as well as the headquarters company and the logistic assets, have been deployed. The regiment deployed on operation for the first time with the "Sassari" Brigade, to which it is also assigned in peacetime. The Italian infantrymen operate VCC-1 and VCC-2 armored personnel carriers, as well as wheeled vehicles, during their patrols.

Attached to the 151st "Sassari" Mechanized Infantry Regiment is an armored squadron from the 3rd Savoia Cavalry Regiment, which is equipped with Centauro B1 wheeled armored reconnaissance vehicles. A Squadron, 3rd Savoia Cavalry Regiment is equipped with 10 Centauro B1 divided into two platoons of four and a command element. One of these two platoons is on stand-by around the clock. The stand-by Centauro platoon is used as a Quick Reaction Force within Task Force "Dimonios." Usually the Centauro B1s of the Italian contingent in Iraq are used for convoy escort operations. Another important task is night patrolling, during which the vehicle's thermal imaging equipment is a real advantage. Also part of Task Force "Dimonios" is a rifle company from the "Serenissima" Lagoon Regiment and a company of marines from the "San Marco" Regiment. Like the infantrymen of the army, these troops operate wheeled vehicles and VCC-1 armored personnel carriers on patrols.

- Task Force "Piave" is the "Sassari" Brigade's engineer asset. It consists of the 3rd Engineer Regiment and is re-enforced by an engineer company from the 5th Engineer Regiment of the "Sassari" Brigade. Task Force "Piave" is also based at the Tallil airfield close to the ancient ruins of Ur.
- Task Force "Volturno" is based on the "Sassari" Brigade's Combat Service Support Unit and based at Camp "White Horse." The unit is re-enforced by an NBC defense company from the 7th "Cremona" NBC Regiment, a C4 company from the 7th Signal Regiment, and an electronic warfare platoon from the 33rd "Falzarego" IEW Regiment.
- Task Force "El Alamein," which is basically the brigade support group, is based at Tallil airfield. The unit is based on the 6th Transportation Regiment and re-enforced by one company from the 6th Maneuver Regiment.
- Task Force MSU (Multinational Specialized Unit), the *Carabinieri* battle group, consists of troops from the 2nd Mobile Brigade and a platoon from the 1st "Tuscania" *Carabinieri* Airborne Regiment. The Task Force is re-enforced by a

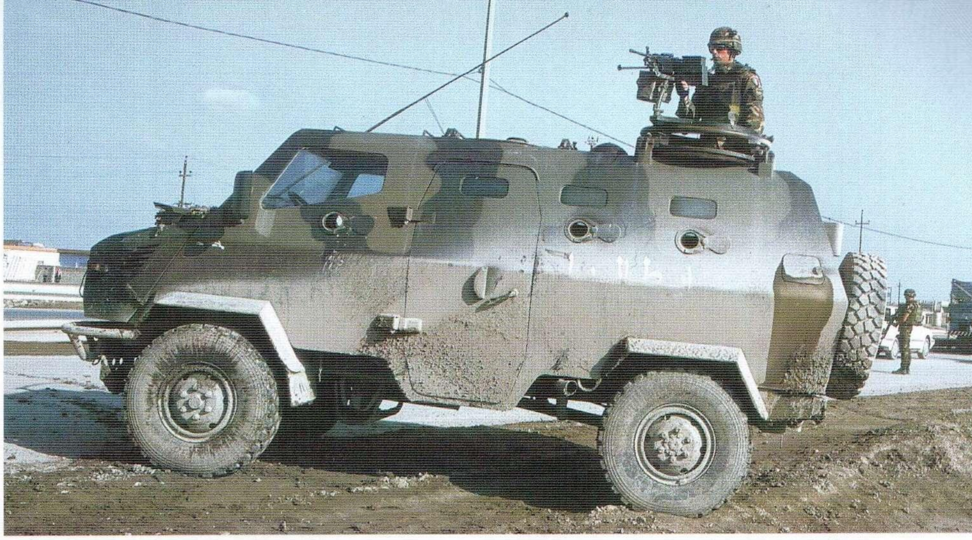


A couple of Pionierpanzer 1 armored engineer vehicles are among the engineer equipment used by Task Force "Piave." Here one of these armored engineer vehicles prepares a parking lot outside of Camp "White Horse."



The identification papers of an Iraqi driver are checked while Italian troops of the 1st Section, 1st Platoon, 1st "Cobra" Company of the 151st "Sassari" Mechanized Infantry Regiment search his car during a patrol in Nasiriyah. The soldier in the photo, who is the section commander of the unit, is armed with a 12mm SPAS 15 automatic shotgun.

Close-up of the machine gunner on top of the Boneschi MAV 5 light armored vehicle. He is armed with a 5.56mm MINIMI light machine gun.



A Boneschi MAV 5 light armored vehicle belonging to the 1st Section, 1st Platoon, 1st "Cobra" Company of the 151st "Sassari" Mechanized Infantry Regiment. Note the machine gunner positioned atop the vehicle providing cover for his comrades who conduct a vehicle search at a checkpoint.

Romanian and a Portuguese military police company. Task force MSU is based in Camp "Libeccio" in the city center of Nasiriyah.

- The Air Force component consists of the 6° ROA's 15th Wing with three HH3-F search and rescue helicopters. The helicopters can also be used for troop transport and Special Forces operations. A maintenance and supply component with C-130J transport aircraft supports the helicopter asset. In the near future a transport helicopter asset will also be deployed to Iraq fielding two CH-47 Chinook and eight AB-412 helicopters. All the air force assets are based at the Tallil airfield.
- The Navy component of the Italian Joint Task Force consists of only one asset, the "San Giusto" Landing Platform Dock. Based on board the ship are a hospital with a surgery section, a marine platoon from the San Marco Regiment and three SH-3D helicopters. The ship is based off shore in the Persian Gulf.

Non-Italian Forces under Command of the "Sassari" Brigade

In addition to the nearly 3000 Italian troops, the "Sassari" Brigade also has the following troops from Romania and Portugal under its command:

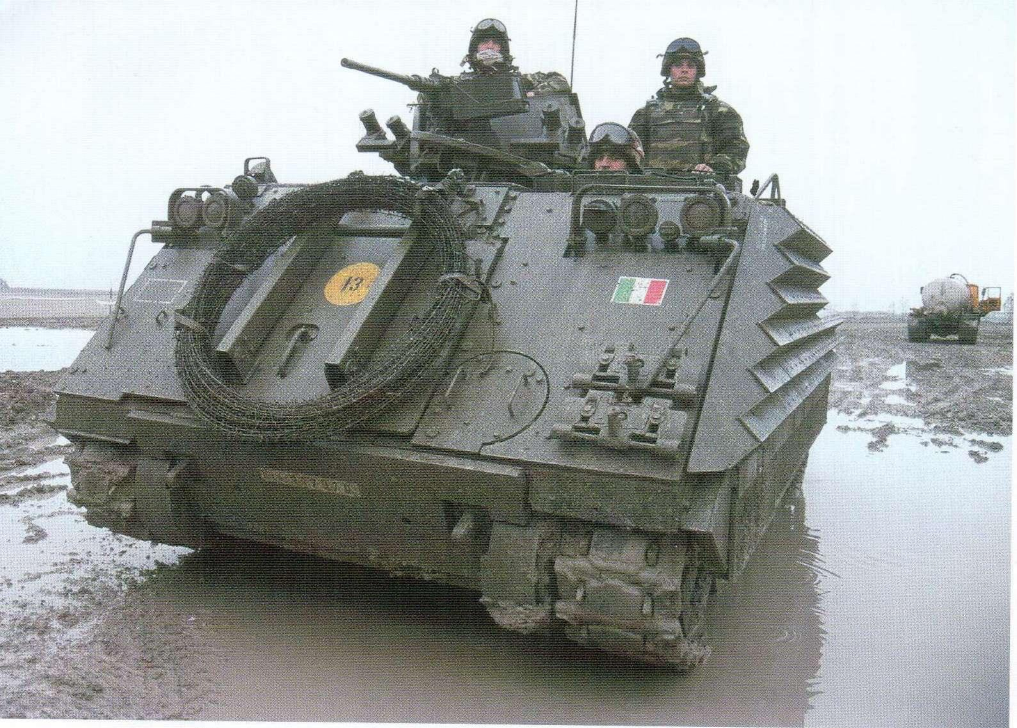
- Task Force "Samus," the 405-soldier 811th Infantry Battalion of the Romanian Army, is based at Camp "White Horse" outside Nasiriyah.
- A Romanian military police company from 265th Military Police Battalion based in Bucharest is under command of the MSU. The approximately 100-men unit is based at Camp "Libeccio" in the city of Nasiriyah.
- Another Romanian unit under command of the "Sassari" Brigade is the 383rd NBC Defense Company, whose home base is in Bistrita. At present the approximately 100 soldiers of the unit are based in Camp "White Horse" outside of Nasiriyah.
- Also part of the MSU and based at Camp "Libeccio" in the city of Nasiriyah is a Portuguese military police company. The unit is 130 soldiers strong and is equipped with Boneschi MAV 5 light armored vehicles.

Weapons and Equipment of the Italian Troops

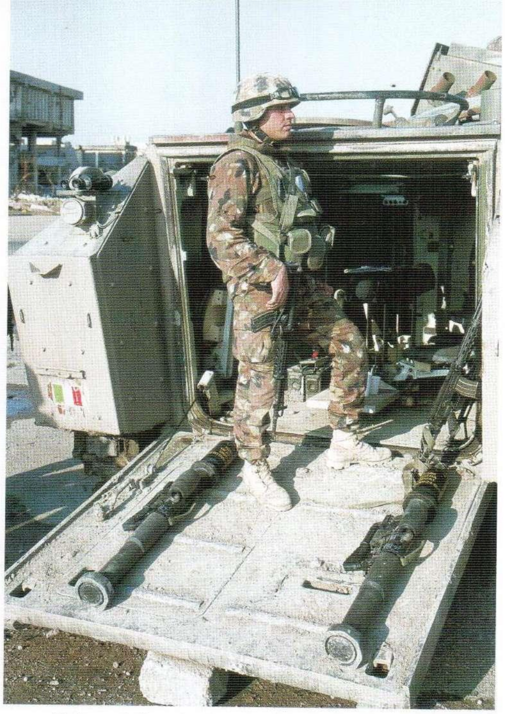
Small arms in use among the Italian troops include the 9mm Beretta 92 FS pistol, the 5.56mm Beretta AR 70/90 assault rifle, the 12mm SPAS 15 automatic shotgun, the 5.56mm FN MINIMI light machine gun, the 7.62mm MG 42/59 machine gun, and the 8.6mm version of the Accuracy International sniper rifle. Some of the 5.56mm Beretta AR 70/90s have a 40mm M203PI grenade launcher mounted under their barrel. The heavy machine gun they use is the 12.7mm M2 HB Browning. Usually this weapon is mounted on vehicles going on patrol.

Anti-tank weapons in use with the Italian troops in Iraq include the Panzerfaust 3 light anti-tank weapon and the TOW anti-tank missile system mounted on the M113A1. Also based on the M113 APC is the M106A1 mortar carrier used by the Italians. Fitted with a 120mm mortar, the vehicle provides the brigade commander with his own light artillery asset.

The most powerful vehicle in the "Sassari" Brigade's inventory is the Centauro B1 light armored reconnaissance vehicle. The 8x8 wheeled vehicle is armed with a 105mm tank gun, a 7.62mm coaxial machine gun, and two roof-mounted 7.62mm machine guns. The mechanized elements of the Italian contingent use VCC-1 and VCC-2 armored personnel carriers for more robust patrolling. Routine patrols are conducted in IVECO 40.10 WM 4x4 VM-90T light trucks and in Boneschi MAV 5 VM-90P light armored vehicles. The IVECO 40.10 WM 4x4



Many of the troops, when they deployed to Iraq, expected to arrive in a sandy desert. But in wintertime, rain turns the whole country into a desert of mud, not of sand. Here a VCC-1 armored personnel carrier of the 151st "Sassari" Mechanized Infantry Regiment patrols outside Camp "White Horse." The VCC-1, which is based on the M113, has a crew of nine soldiers, including a seven-man infantry section. The vehicles that were deployed to Iraq are all fitted with an appliqué armor kit.



This soldier belongs to a squad of "San Marco" Marines that is on guard duty in the city of Nasiriyah. He stands on the rear ramp of a VCC-1 armored personnel carrier and is armed with a 5.56mm Beretta 70/90 assault rifle. Note the ready-to-use Panzerfaust 3 anti-tank weapons attached to the rear ramp.

is also used in its ambulance version, which is called the VM-90A. For reconnaissance and liaison duties, the Italian troops use the Land Rover Defender 90 and 110 in various configurations.

Other vehicles deployed to Iraq with the Italian contingent include the ATC 81 tank transporter, the ACM 80 and ACM 90 medium class trucks, and the ACP 90 heavy truck. The Italians also use the Astra SM 44.30 BAD truck, the Astra HD 6 truck, and the APS 95 truck. For recovery needs, the M120 and M180 wrecker are available. Tankers in use are the Astra BM 201 M A1 and the Fiat 190F. Among other engineer equipment, the Italian engineer contingent can field some Pionierpanzer 1 armored engineer vehicles.

On Patrol in Nasiriyah with the 151st "Sassari" Mechanized Infantry Regiment

It is just two o'clock on 4 December 2003 when the IVECO 40.10 WM 4x4 VM-90T light truck and the Boneschi MAV 5 VM-90P light armored vehicle of the 1st Section, 1st Platoon, 1st "Cobra" Company of the 151st "Sassari" Infantry Regiment arrive at the main gate of Camp "White Horse" to pick me up to go out on patrol. I am greeted by a lieutenant, the patrol leader, who quickly explains his task: "We'll do a routine patrol in Nasiriyah, during which we'll conduct some mobile vehicle checkpoints, and we'll patrol for some time on foot in one of the poorer parts of the city." Continuing, he says, "The patrol will last approximately four hours, but you never know."

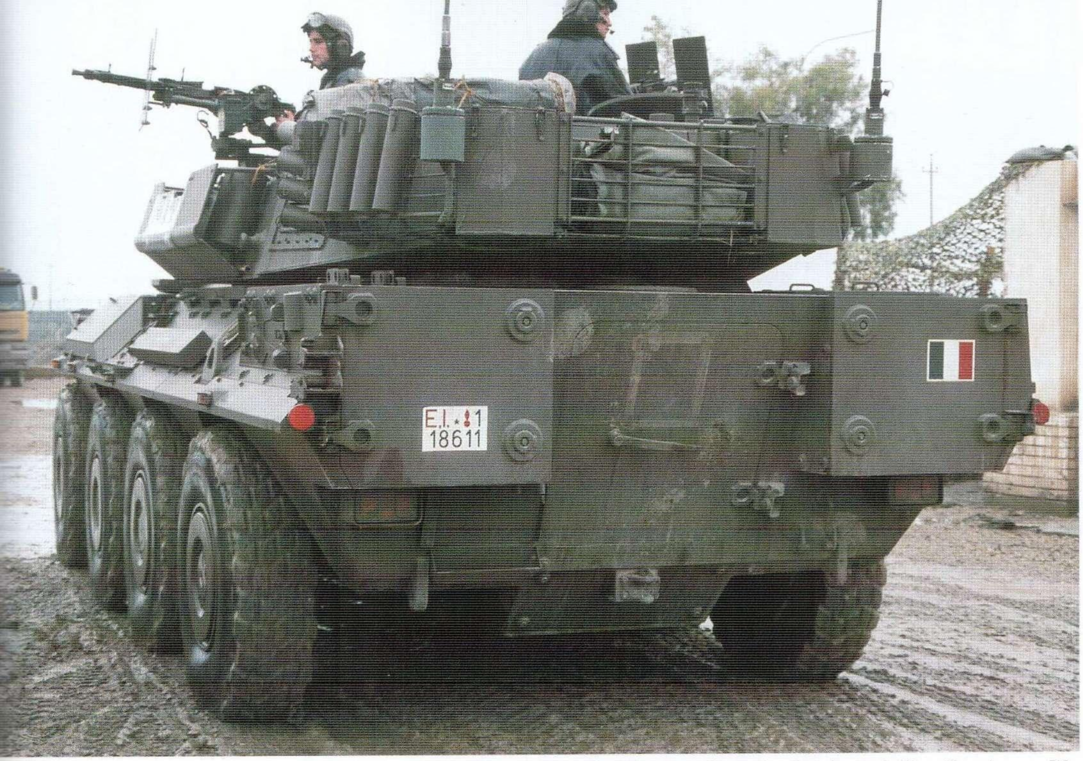
I climb into the back of the IVECO 40.10 WM 4x4 truck, which the Italian soldiers call a VM-90T. The vehicle has a crew of five men consisting of the driver, the patrol commander who is armed with a 12mm SPAS 15 automatic shotgun, a machine gunner who operates a 12.7mm M2 HB machine gun mounted on a weapon station on the roof, a light machine gunner who is armed with a 5.56mm MINIMI light machine gun, and a rifleman who is armed with a 5.56mm Beretta AR 70/90 assault rifle. The crew of the Boneschi MAV 5, which is called a VM-90P, is also five men strong and similarly armed.

After a quarter of an hour we arrive in the city of Nasiriyah. The streets are crowded with locals doing their daily shopping; people and cars are everywhere. The Italian infantrymen keep their eyes open because it was in such busy traffic that a US soldier was shot at close range recently by a member of the resistance. But today everything looks quiet in Nasiriyah. Along the sides of the streets, kids wave to the Italian troops.

After some twenty minutes in the city center, we move north on the main road that leads to Al Kut. We make a turn just beyond a big crossroads outside the city. The two vehicles of the patrol are now placed in the lane leading to the city, creating something of a roadblock. Immediately after the vehicles stop, six of the ten soldiers leave the vehicle and set up a vehicle checkpoint. The drivers stay with the vehicle and look after the radio. The machine gunners remain behind their weapons and provide cover for the rest of the patrol, which now begins to stop and search cars.

Once the cars are stopped, the passengers are asked to get out. While two soldiers search the passengers, two other soldiers check the vehicle. During the check, the soldiers keep the driver close by; if the vehicle is booby trapped, he will be in the danger area, too. Today nothing is found in the VCP, but usually patrols turn up weapons like 7.62mm AK-47s on a daily basis. If nothing else is found, the weapon is usually confiscated and details about the owners are taken down. So many people own rifles in Iraq that this is not an accurate indication of a terrorist, but certainly the person will be checked on in the near future.

After the patrol has checked 20 cars, we move on. This time we will patrol along the dam of the Euphrates, which runs through the city. We just arrive at the dam when rifle fire can be heard. The patrol stops and the troops dismount and take an all around defensive position. "Don't worry," says the lieutenant, "today is Thursday, wedding day, and most likely these shots were fired during a wedding celebration." With his binoculars he checks the surrounding area, and he is right. In some of the streets large tents with rows of chairs and crowds of people, mainly male, can be seen. It looks like there are several parties going on in different streets. It is hard to say from which the celebratory gunfire originated. The lieutenant makes a report to the battalion ops room and then we get back into the vehicles and carry on. It will only stir up trouble to search a wedding party for weapons, so the Italian troops stay away and ignore the gunfire. Good relations with the locals are more important than one or two confiscated assault rifles.



Rear view of a Centauro B1 of A Squadron of the 3rd Savoia Cavalry Regiment. The Centauro B1s deployed to Iraq are of the latest production version and are able to carry up to four infantrymen in their rear compartment. If troops are carried, storage racks for 24 rounds are removed and four seats are mounted in the rear compartment of the vehicle instead.

Part of the MSU is a Portuguese military police company. Here Portuguese MPs patrol close to the destroyed former Italian headquarters in the city center of Nasiriyah. The soldier in front is armed with a 9mm MP5 submachine gun.

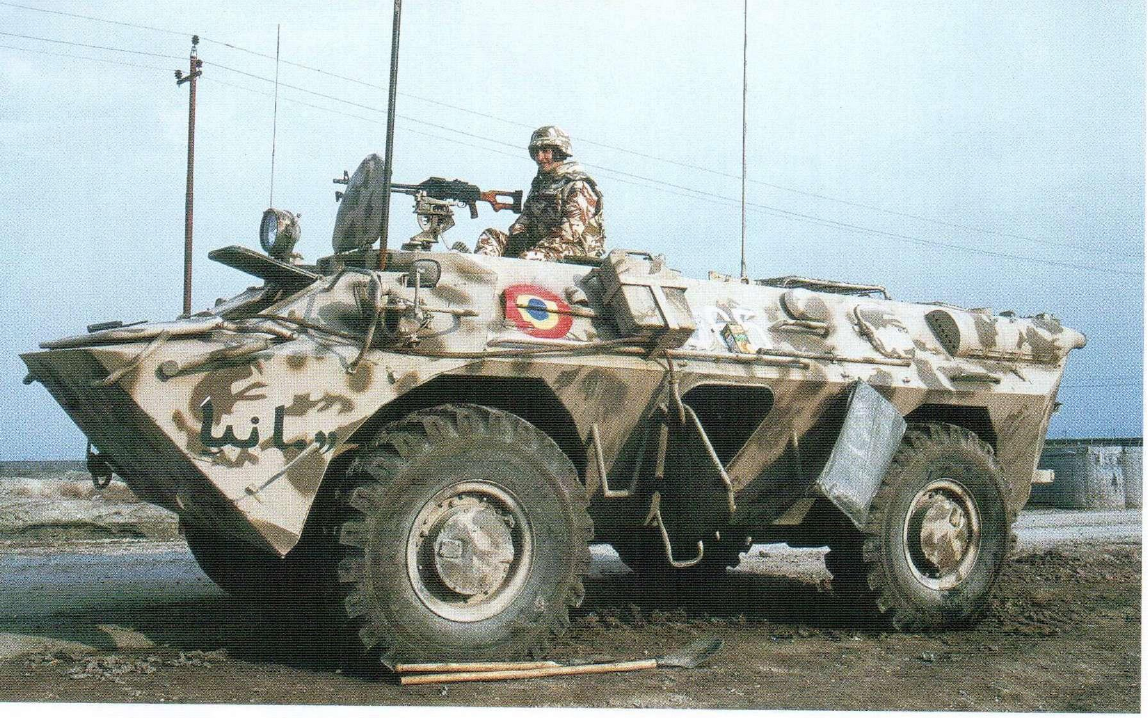
After following the river for a quarter of an hour, we again reach the city center, this time close to the river. This part of the city is closed to the locals. To the left I notice a blown up building and I look at the lieutenant with an inquisitive expression on my face. "Yes," he says, "this was the former HQ and CIMIC building that was blown up by a suicide attack on the 12th of November." He continues, "In the attack, 19 Italian soldiers and eight Iraqis died. The building was totally destroyed, as you can see." The square in front of the building is guarded by a section of "San Marco" marines, who stand close to their VCC-1 armored personnel carrier with their Panzerfaust 3 anti-tank weapons, ready to counter any suicide car attack on the nearby MSU compound. Also on guard here is a patrol of Portuguese military policemen of the MSU. One reason for the strong troop presence is that at night, snipers fire over the Euphrates into the MSU Camp "Libeccio" from the deserted buildings close to the former HQ and CIMIC building.

Suddenly the lieutenant calls me: "Hurry up and jump in. We have to go". After I am back in the vehicle he explains that we have to go north again. Our task is to check a suspicious ambulance. Intelligence believes that it is possible that the vehicle is being used to smuggle weapons. At high speed we dash through Nasiriyah heading north. Again we stop close to a crossroads, and just in time. As we get out of the trucks, an ambulance speeds down the street. The driver turns on the siren so he can pass the roadblock without being searched. Usually this works, but not today. The Italian infantrymen stop the car and take a quick glance in the back. A bleeding man can be seen on the stretcher, and a medic is doing his best to save the man's life. The soldiers let the ambulance go, but we follow it to the hospital so that they can have closer look. On arrival at the hospital, after the patient is brought into the building, the ambulance is searched, but no weapons are found. Today it was a false alarm, but a couple of days later in a similar search several kilograms of explosives were found and three people were arrested.

We leave the hospital area for our last task, a presence patrol on foot in a part of the city. We stop the trucks at the entrance to the populated streets we have to patrol. The six soldiers get out of the trucks and advance along the street in single file to the left and right of the road. Closely behind them follow the two trucks with machine guns on top. Soon kids surround us trying to make conversation and asking for sweets and water. It is not a good idea to give them anything; since there are so many, giving something to one of them will certainly provoke a fight among the children for the treat. The lieutenant, who leads the foot patrol, stops from time to time and, through the patrol's interpreter, asks questions of the shop owners and their customers. "Do you feel safe in the area?" he inquires. "Have you seen people with weapons or something suspicious? Is the water supply working? Do you have any problems in your area here? Do you see Iraqi police patrolling the area?" All the information the lieutenant gathers he writes down in his notebook so he can report it later to the CIMIC and intelligence people.

After twenty minutes on foot in the crowded street we get back onto the trucks. By now, we have an escort of about one hundred children, which makes it difficult to leave the area. It takes some time before we manage to get back onto the main road. When we return to Camp "White Horse," four hours are long gone, but we have received an interesting first-hand view of the routine of the Italian soldiers on patrol in Nasiriyah.

This Portuguese MSU member was seen on patrol in the city of Nasiriyah. He is armed with a 7.62mm G3A4 assault rifle with a retractable butt. A total of 130 Portuguese military policemen form part of the MSU.



In use in Iraq with the 811th Infantry Battalion of the Romanian Army is the TABC, a wheeled armored reconnaissance vehicle that uses a number of automotive components of the TAB-77. The basic version is fitted with a one-man turret fitted with a 14.5mm KPVT and a 7.62mm PKT. The vehicle, which has a crew of four soldiers, boasts a combat weight of 9275kg (20,451 lb.). It is powered by a six-cylinder, turbo-charged, diesel engine and can reach a top speed of 85km/h (53 mph). The vehicle is fully amphibious and can travel with at a speed of 8km/h (5 mph) when swimming. The TAB RCH-84 can be seen in this photograph. Based on the TABC, the TAB RCH-84 is a chemical and radiological reconnaissance vehicle that is fitted with an NBC detection system.

811th Infantry Battalion – Romanian Troops in Iraq

The 811th Infantry Battalion of the Romanian army operates under command of the Italian "Sassari Brigade." Within the brigade, the Romanian infantry unit is called Task Force "Samus." The AOR of Task Force "Samus" stretches south from Nasiriyah and covers an area of 5600 square kilometers (3478 square miles) along the Euphrates River. Within this area, which is called "AOR Bravo," is situated the city of Suq As Shuyukh.

The mission of the 811th Infantry Battalion is to maintain a safe, stable environment and freedom of movement within its AOR. Specifically, this means guarding various oil pipelines, providing security to the Coalition's main supply roads running through the area, and assisting UN agencies and NGOs in their tasks in the AOR. They also raise and train troops for the Iraqi Civil Defence Corps (ICDC), conduct joint patrol with the ICDC, and provide security for installations of the CPA (Civil Provisional Authority) and civilian installations such as power plants and water factories. In addition, the 811th Infantry Battalion is tasked with providing a mobile reserve for MND (SE), to which the Italian "Sassari Brigade" is subordinated.

Structure of the Battalion

The 405-soldier 811th Infantry Battalion is composed of a HQ company, a logistic support company and two infantry companies. One of the two infantry companies is motorized and the other is mechanized. The motorized company is equipped with DAC 15.215DFAEG 6x6 5 ton trucks while the mechanized infantry company is equipped with TAB-77, B-33 and TABC wheeled armored personnel carriers. A spokesman of the battalion mentioned in an interview that the unit is able to field a total of 20 different kinds of wheeled armored personnel carriers.

Short History of the 811th Infantry Battalion

Based in Dej, the 811th Infantry Battalion was formed as a mechanized infantry unit in 1995 as part of the 81st Mechanized Brigade. Based in Bistrita, the brigade was the first unit in the Romanian Army to be operational after the NATO doctrine was recently adopted in Romania. The brigade was nicknamed "Window of Romanian Army," and the brigade's units participated in several international exercises. Romania was the first Southeast European nation to sign the "Partnership for Peace" agreement, and therefore Romanian troops from the 81st Mechanized Brigade took part in exercises such as "Strong Resolve 2000." In 2002, Romania was invited to join NATO by 2004. This invitation, which was strongly supported by the USA, honored the hard work of the Romanian Armed Forces to meet NATO standards.

In addition to restructuring its armed forces, Romania also demonstrated its desire to become a member of NATO by taking part in international operations. Romanian troops, among them soldiers of the 811th Infantry Battalion, were deployed to Bosnia (SFOR), Kosovo (KFOR) and Afghanistan (ISAF and Operation Enduring Freedom). During the Iraq crises, Romania supported the US policy and subsequently assigned troops to the Combined Joint Task Force 7. The Romanian Ministry of Defense chose the 811th Infantry Battalion to be the first Romanian contingent. After it has passed a pre-operation training package, the unit arrived in Iraq at the end of July. Shortly after the battalion arrived in Iraq, the unit became operational on 10 August 2003. The 811th Infantry Battalion was scheduled to stay in Iraq up to February 2004 before being replaced by a second contingent of Romanian troops.

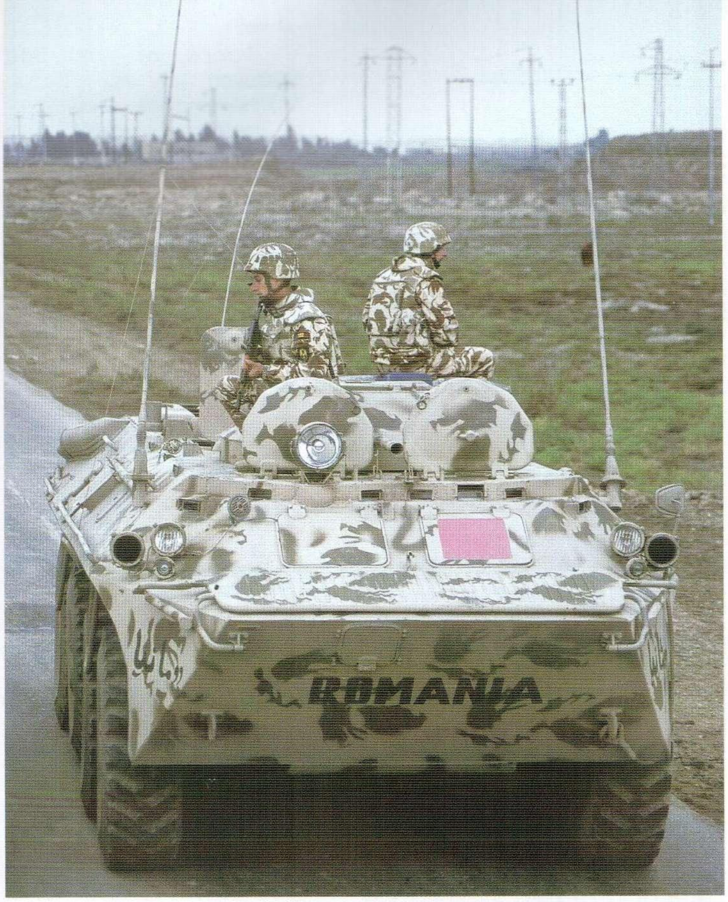
Other Romanian Units in Iraq

In addition to the 405 troops of the 811th Infantry Battalion, the Romanian Army contingent deployed to Iraq consists f another 300 troops. First there is a military police company from the 265th Military Police Battalion based in Bucharest. The unit is attached to the *Carabineri* force of the "Sassari" Brigade and is based in the city of Nasiriyah. Another Romanian unit under command of the "Sassari" Brigade is the 383rd NBC Defense Company, whose home base is in Bistrita. It is currently based at Camp "White Horse" outside of Nasiriyah. But the Romanian Army also has an engineer company and a military intelligence company deployed to Iraq that are under command of the Polish-led Multinational Division (Central South).

Weapons and Equipment of the 811th Infantry Battalion

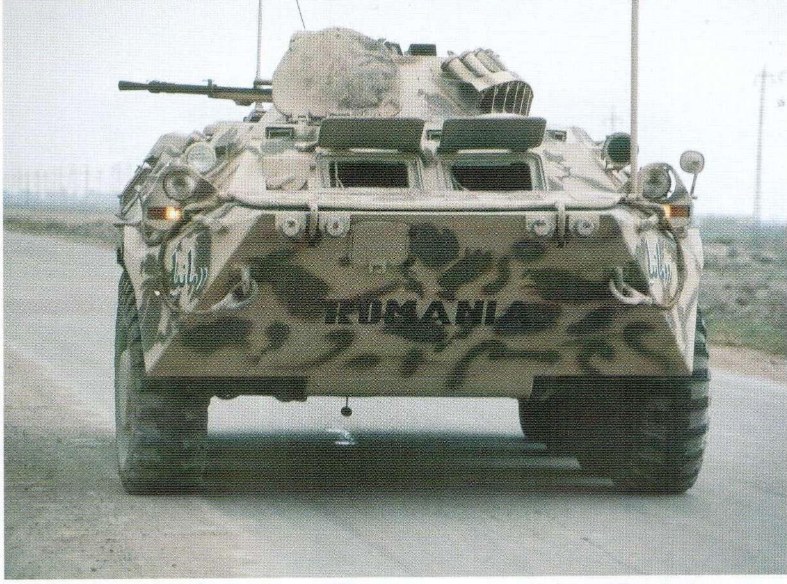
The standard weapon of the Romanian infantryman is the 5.45mm AK-74 assault rifle. Basically, the weapon is a copy of the Russian AK-74, but features slight modifications. Like most of the Romanian equipment, the assault rifles are manufactured in Romania. Some of the 5.45mm AK-74s are fitted with a 40mm AG-40 grenade launcher under the hand guard. The 5.45mm RPK-74, which is based on the AK-74, is used as light machine gun.

For more robust firepower, each section can field a 7.62mm PKM with a bipod. The PKM is also used in its sustained fire version, the PKMS, which uses a tripod. As a night vision device for these weapons, the Romanian troops use the Pilkington Kite weapon sight, which can be mounted on assault rifles and machine guns. For fire support, the Romanian infantry can field 40mm AGS-40 automatic grenade launchers and 82mm Model 77 mortars. Their sniper rifle of choice is the 7.62mm PSL, which is basically a version of the 7.62mm SVD Dragunov manufactured under license in Romania.



The TAB-77 is the BTR-70 wheeled armored personnel carrier manufactured under license in Romania. The vehicle in the picture is a TAB-77A 145M, the command version, which can be identified by the additional antennas.

The wheeled armored personnel carriers used within the Romanian contingent are a mixed fleet of TAB-77, B-33 and the TABC. The TAB-77 is a BTR-70 produced under license in Romania. However, the vehicle differs from the Russian model in several areas. For example, the TAB-77 is fitted with two diesel engines while the Russian BTR-70 uses two petrol engines. Like the BTR-70, the TAB-77 is armed with a 14.5mm KPVT heavy machine gun and a coaxial mounted 7.62mm PKT machine gun. The B-33 wheeled armored personnel carrier, which is also made in Romania, is similar to the Russian BTR-80 but also differs in some ways from the Russian original. The third wheeled armored personnel carrier use by the Romanian troops in Iraq is the TABC. The TABC is more of a wheeled armored reconnaissance vehicle than a wheeled APC. The vehicle is designed in Romania and uses a number of automotive components of the TAB-77. The basic version is fitted with the same one-man turret fitted with a 14.5mm KPVT and a 7.62mm PKT as is used by the TAB-77.

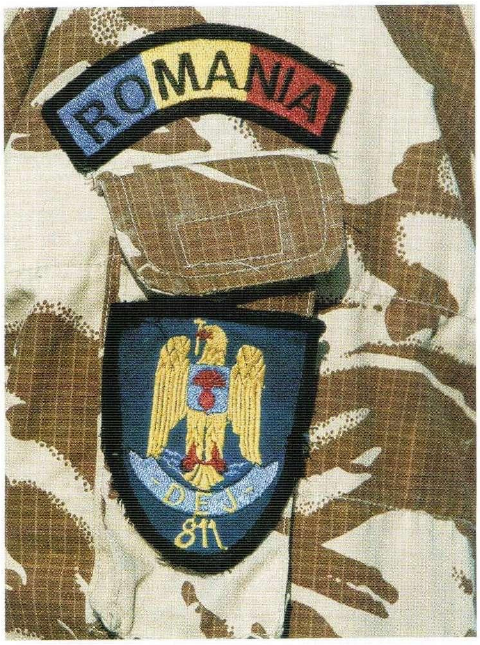


In Iraq, the 811th Infantry Battalion uses the B-33, a Romanian version of the BTR-80 wheeled armored personnel carrier. The vehicle is fitted with a one-man turret armed with a 14.5mm KPVT machine gun and a coaxial 7.62mm PKMS machine gun.

In Iraq, the TABC is also used in its NBC reconnaissance vehicle version, which is called the TAB RCH-84. The vehicle is fitted with a chemical and radiological detection system. The motorized company of the 811th Infantry Battalion is equipped with DAC 15.215DFAEG 6x6 5-ton trucks. Like most of the weapons and vehicles used by the 811th Infantry Battalion, the soldiers' uniforms are also made in Romania. However, the camouflage pattern used is the standard British Desert DPM.

A Romanian infantryman keeps watch while his comrades prepare a vehicle checkpoint somewhere south of Nasiriyah. He is armed with a 5.45mm AK-74 assault rifle. A B-33 wheeled armored personnel carrier can be seen behind him.

This Romanian infantryman of the 811th Infantry Battalion is armed with an RPK-74, the light machine gun version of the 5.45mm AK-74 assault rifle. The weapon is basically an AK-74 assault rifle with a longer, heavier barrel and a bipod. Note the British Desert DPM pattern of the Romanian-made uniforms.



Badge of the 811th Infantry Battalion, which is based in Dej in Romania. The unit belongs to the 81st Mechanized Brigade, which s based in Bistrita, where the famous castle of Count Dracula is located.

Troops of the 2r Battalion of the Dutc Marines provide security t a traffic accident th involved a Coalition forc supply truck. The troops a armed with the 5.56m C7A1 assault rifle. Of th 1000-soldier Dutc contingent in Iraq, some 8 belong to the Kor Mariniers.

Dutch Contingent

The Dutch contingent is formed of troops of the *Koninklijke Marine* (Royal Netherlands Navy), the *Koninklijke Luchtmacht* (Royal Netherlands Air Force), the *Koninklije Landmacht* (Royal Netherlands Army), and the *Koninklijke Marechassee* (Military Police). In total, the Dutch forces in Iraq number 1100 troops.

The Dutch battle group is responsible for the northwest region of the AOR of the MND (SE). The Dutch AOR consists of the Al Muthanna province, and it stretches from As Samawah down to the Saudi Arabian border. Most of the AOR is flat desert so that the key areas for operations of the Dutch troops are the border (in order to prevent smuggling) and the populated areas along the Euphrates. Larger towns in the Dutch AOR are As Samawah and Ar Rumaythah.

Dutch Marines

The first contingent of Dutch troops deployed to Iraq in August 2003. It was relieved in November by the second contingent, which, like the first one, will stay in Iraq for four months. While the bulk of the first Dutch contingent was drawn from the 1st Battalion of the *Korps Mariniers*, the bulk of the second Dutch contingent deployed to Iraq is drawn from the 2nd Battalion of the corps. The *Korps Mariniers* forms part of the Dutch Navy and is the equivalent to the marines of other nations.

A total of 650 Marines from the 2nd Battalion have deployed to Iraq. The battalion consists of a battalion HQ, three infantry companies (21st, 22nd and 23rd Company), a support company (20th Company), and a National Support Element formed by the logistic support company (24th Company). The bulk of the troops are based in As Samawah. The 21st Infantry Company is based in Ar Rumaythah while the 23rd Infantry Company is based in Al Khidr. A field dressing station that is also based at As Samawah reinforces the battalion.

The weapons inventory of the Dutch marines includes the 5.56mm Diemaco C7A1 assault rifle, the 5.56mm MINIMI light machine gun and the 7.62mm FN FAL machine gun, as well as the AT-4 anti-tank weapon. The support company is able to field a couple of 81mm mortars and the Dragon anti-tank guided missile. The Dutch troops patrol in Land Rover Defender 90s and 110s, as well as in Patria XA-186 wheeled armored personnel carriers.

Here a Land Rover 110 Defender belonging to the Dutch Marine patrols somewhere in southern Iraq. The vehicle is fitted with machine gun mount on which a 7.62mm FN MAG is mounted. Whi most of the patrolling of the Dutch troops in Iraq is done with sof skinned vehicles, the Dutch troops also deployed some Patria SISU XA 186 wheeled armored personnel carriers to Iraq.

Army and Air Force

While the *Koninklijke Landmacht* will soon take over the task from the *Korps Mariniers*, it is currently present only with support elements. This includes a detachment of the 11th *Afedeling Rijdende Artillerie*. Th troops act as Forward Observation Officers in case the Dutch troops nee close air support or artillery fire support. Other elements of the arm include a construction engineer company, a logistic detachment, a signa detachment, and an EOD team.

When the Dutch Army takes over the responsibility, the infantry wi be drawn from the 11 *Luchtmobile Brigade* (Airmobile Brigade). Th Royal Netherlands Air Force supports the Dutch contingent with three CH 47D Chinooks. The helicopters of the 289 Squadron of the Tactica Helicopter Group deployed along with a ground crew consisting of 9 soldiers. The helicopter asset is based at the Tallil air base.

The troops of the *Koninklijke Marechassee* (Military Police) ar divided into two detachments. The first, which is 13 soldiers strong supports the Dutch troops with the classic military police tasks such a traffic control, security tasks, and so on. The second detachment, which i 25 soldiers strong, is tasked with building up and supporting the local Iraq police service. The members of the *Koninklijke Marechassee* provid advice and training support.

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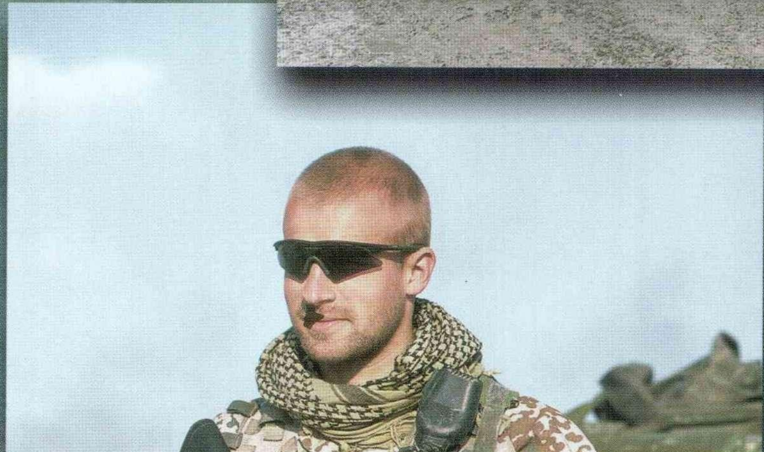

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